THE CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE

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THE CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE

REPORT OF CONFERENCE HELD BY THE COMMISSION ON CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AMERICA. COLUMBUS, OHIO. DECEMBER 8-10, 1915

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SECRETARIAL PREFACE

In the years 1910-1912, under the supervision of Research Secretary, the Rev. G. Frederick Wells, the Federal Council maintained a "bureau and clearing-house of research, information, and promotion, touching the various church and country life interests." Since 1913 a special committee, known as the Committe on Church and Country Life, has been in charge of this work, and an executive has been employed to give it his undivided attention. During the past year the office of this executive has been in Columbus, Ohio. It was the idea of the committee to make Ohio largely a clearing-house of information and it was thought desirable to be in close contact with the rural work in a state which is fairly central and in which there is a variety of rural conditions.

The executive has been of some assistance to those interested in the organization for rural church and country life in Ohio. In August, 1914, an organization called the Ohio Rural Life Association was formed, including an Advisory Council made up of persons who are in close touch with work for the betterment of country life, while there is a Committee on Interchurch Cooperation, consisting of bishops, superintendents, and others, representing sixteen denominations. A program for constructive work has

been adopted. As soon as the church survey of the state should be completed, it was planned that this committee should meet for two or three days' session to determine the best possible plan of action to improve the serious rural church conditions disclosed by the survey.

The main work during the year in Ohio has been a state-wide survey supplementing the work of 1912 and 1913 by the Presbyterian Church and the Ohio Rural Life Survey. The attempt has been made to ascertain the location and denomination of every rural church, its present membership, whether it is gaining or losing in membership, and whether it ordinarily has a resident pastor, and what part of a minister's service it receives. Most of these facts have been ascertained for the churches in more than 1,100 out of a total of 1,352 rural townships, while the survey is well under way in most of the remaining townships. The data for 216 townships were taken from the work of the Ohio Rural Life Survey, whereas many data from nearly 200 additional townships, though not the location of the churches, were ascertained from the same source. So far as the data have been tabulated, they indicate that nearly one fourth of the townships of the state, comprising a territory of more than 9,000 square miles, are without resident ministers and that a very large proportion of the churches in this area are declining in membership; that on an average there are nearly four churches in each of these townships; that there is a church to every 286 persons, while there is one minister to about

800 persons. These persons, however, are divided in different communities in such a way that rarely does a minister have a community in which he has an opportunity for unhampered leadership in community betterment.

The surveys made during the last five or six years indicate that conditions may be no better in other states. However, there is ground to hope that through interdenominational cooperation something can be done for improvement. While betterment can be brought about only by slow advancement, it is a matter of great importance that, even though slow, such advancement shall be made. If the Commission in cooperation with the people of Ohio and through correspondence with persons in other states can learn ways and means for the solution of the vital and fundamental problem of rural church decline, its service should prove one of the most important of those rendered by the Federal Council of Churches.

The demonstration that it is feasible to make a state-wide survey is regarded as of some importance. If, as anticipated, the survey shall point out ways of betterment and the ecclesiastical forces of the state shall act successfully upon the suggestions to which it may lead, the survey work in Ohio and the program of the Committee on Church and Country Life will be justified by substantial results.

The high grade of accomplishment of many country pastors in various parts of the United States justifies expectation that, as the direct result of a propaganda, a great advance can be made in the work of

country churches generally. The superior work is often the result of a new understanding of the country life problem and a new vision of the possibilities of work in the rural parish. Many a pastor has revolutionized his work and doubled his effectiveness because of information gained through surveys, through the literature of the modern country church movement, or through contact with persons active in the movement. It is proposed in the state of Ohio, as a chief part of the work for the next year, to make a special study of successful work of country churches and rural pastors, to publish a description of it in bulletins, and to send these to every rural pastor in the state and to students in theological seminaries. Thus it is hoped out of actual accomplishment on the field itself to create higher ideals and standards for rural church work. If this program is carried out in all the states, the effect upon country life and on the religious life of the nation will be of no small significance.

It is proposed also to hold an increased number of country church institutes in the various counties, and where county organizations do not already exist to stimulate the formation of County Committees to act as coordinating agencies in the readjustment of church life.

Interdenominational organization for country church betterment has had an excellent effect upon some of the country ministers. It gives an esprit de corps to the country ministry, adds courage, and increases confidence and respect for country church

work. It has become influential in drawing good men into the rural parishes. It increases the zest of the country pastors for the peculiar type of work needed in the country. A number of young men are now entering the ministry with the purpose of devoting their lives to work in the country. Pastors in the rural districts are refusing calls to city churches. One of my correspondents left his position as instructor in an agricultural college to become pastor of a country church; one country pastor of my acquaintance has declined an invitation to become president of a college; while one has left a church in a town to devote the best years of his life to work in a small country parish.

In December, 1914, the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches at its annual meeting determined to create a Commission to whose direction its rural work should be entrusted. At their meeting on December 20th, the members of the Committee on Church and Country Life were informed that they had been appointed on the new Commission, and the necessary steps were taken to secure the nomination of other members by the constituent bodies of the Federal Council. In order to secure the continuance of the work already begun, a Committee of Direction was appointed. The work is now under the supervision of this committee.

With the approval of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Council, preparations were made for a Conference on Church and Country Life at the time of this meeting. Eminent representatives of the

different denominations and of civic and moral progress accepted invitations to participate. Among them was the President of the United States, who made a special journey from Washington to Columbus in order to be present and make an address. Nothing could more signally reveal the importance of the church to the well-being of the country than this act of the chief executive of the nation, with the added emphasis thus given to the principles set forth in his address.

The Committee of Direction prepared a program for this Conference, the sessions of which were held during the morning, afternoon, and evening of December 8, 9, and 10, 1915, for the most part in the First Congregational Church, Columbus, Ohio, Dr. Washington Gladden, pastor emeritus, offering the opening invocation. Papers carefully written were read and discussed, and in the light of the discussion have now been revised for publication. The address of the Rev. Ralph A. Felton, of New York City, on "The Present Condition of the Rural Churches," is not included, as no copy was available owing to unavoidable causes.

The general topics covered are as follows: The Country Church as a Community Center; The Allies of the Country Church; The Function, Policy, and Program of the Country Church; The Training of the Rural Ministry; Financing the Country Church; Church Federation and Cooperation; The Church and Rural Economy; The Rural Church as a Vitalizing Agent.

The full range of material presented at the Con-

ference, with the names of those submitting the reports and contributing papers and addresses, can be seen under Contents, on pages iii, iv. The report on the Function, Platform, and Policy of the Country Church is particularly worthy of note. The material upon which it is based was gathered by correspondence with one hundred and fifty persons from various parts of the United States who are closely associated with the country church and its work. A preliminary digest of this material was made by Dr. Wilbert L. Anderson, author of *The Country Town*. The sudden death of Dr. Anderson occurred at the completion of this stage of the work, but the undertaking was continued by Dr. Butterfield and members of the subcommittee especially appointed for this purpose, while a final revision was made by the Committee on Direction. This report and the material upon which it is based should become an important factor in Rural Church progress.

It appears from our observation in Ohio that in large areas the denominations working independently of one another have failed to prevent serious decline in the rural churches, and that it is entirely unlikely that without interdenominational cooperation the churches will be able to overcome the difficulties of the situation. If this is true in Ohio, and in other states also, the need of interdenominational organization is obvious.

CHARLES O. GILL.

COLUMBUS, OHIO,
April 15, 1916.

THE CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

Frank B. Willis

Because of the supreme importance of the welfare of the country church to the social conditions of the community, not only the people of Ohio but the people of the nation everywhere are deeply interested in the conference which begins at this hour. Close to the source of our national power has been the country church, scattered here and there everywhere throughout this great land. The movement for its continuation and preservation and for the increase of its power is one of the most favorable signs of this decade. In this movement the people of Ohio are very deeply interested, and in their behalf it gives me much pleasure to welcome to the city of Columbus to-day those who are to participate in this most important gathering.

The state of Ohio has always been deeply interested in its rural churches. No other factors have played a more significant part in the development of the history of Ohio, in the making of its splendid manhood and womanhood, than the little churches dotted here and there over every county and in almost every township. The history of many of the most important churches of the state extends back to the time when the pioneers, amid great hardships, as one of their first achievements, erected a log church and school in the

midst of vast wildernesses. The struggle of the fathers to rear and maintain their church homes, and the influence of those church homes upon the development of the people of this great state, cannot be estimated.

One of the most alarming phases of the splendid development which has come in the last generation has been the decline of interest in the country church. The relief from the former isolation of farm life, the coming of modern roads with the automobile and its various distractions, the near approach to city connections, while they have been of inestimable benefit, have created for the country church entirely new problems which it has somehow failed adequately to meet. Carefully compiled figures seem to show beyond question that the rural churches in Ohio have come upon evil times—that they have ceased to grow, that eighty-three per cent. have a membership of less than one hundred, that one out of every nine country churches has been abandoned in recent years, that only one third are increasing in membership, and that two thirds have either ceased to grow or are dying. It seems especially significant to me that the figures show that less than forty per cent. of the rural population are church members. Such a situation is one that demands the concerted and undivided attention of the leaders in church thought and action.

Such a conference as this, therefore, which represents the best thought of the country with regard to the interests of the rural church, commands the attention of every man interested in the welfare of this and other states. I am told that this conference is

especially significant because it is the first nation-wide assembly of leaders from all churches, and represents in particular all rural movements to consider the future of country life with particular reference to the church. Every state, I am informed, is represented at this meeting, and plans are to be formulated for a local campaign in each state to federate country churches and to eliminate duplication of effort and expense. It is exceedingly fortunate that this plan for increased effectiveness of the country churches is to be a concerted plan, and that there is such universal interest in it. The problems which it has to consider lie at the very heart of national morality and accomplishment. It would be an evil day for the people of this country if those who live on the farms close to the heart of nature and of God are to drift further from the former enthusiastic and devoted worship of religious ideals. This conference could present no greater achievement than the adoption of a plan which would bring about the former effective influence of the rural church.

But this cannot be brought about by old methods. The day of three and four small churches in a community of two or three hundred people is past. The times forbid the continuation of sectarian differences that agitated and at times disrupted the churches of former days. This problem must be approached in a broad way. There must be unification of effort; unimportant sectarian distinctions must be wiped away; the overlapping of territory and the maintenance of small and weak churches must be abandoned; neighboring churches of all denominations must work to-

gether for the solution of their problems. Social conditions must be given consideration. It is not enough that the church do Sunday work; it must make its effectiveness felt in the every-day life of the community. These are some of the key-notes for this convention. It is not going to be easy to work out these problems, and every man interested in the state of Ohio, as well as in the nation, should give his vigorous support toward reaching a wise solution of the questions to be considered at this conference.

I am indeed glad to give this movement my hearty support and to welcome the various members of this convention to the city. It is my trust that your conferences together may result in efforts of widespread extent to increase the efficiency of the rural church.

THE PROBLEM

Gifford Pinchot

There can be no permanently sound and vigorous life for the nation unless life in the country is vigorous and sound. Country life cannot be morally strong, physically healthy, attractive in its social opportunities and business returns, and generally satisfying and efficient unless the country church does its full share to make it so. And the country church cannot do its part unless it is sound and vigorous itself. The country church is one of the great roots from which spring

national integrity, vitality, and intelligence. Its life and power are of nation-wide concern.

The permanent strength of any civilization is best measured by the soundness of life on the land. It was the failure of agriculture far more than the decadence of the cities that sapped the power of ancient Rome. The farmer feeds and clothes us all. From the country comes the strong new blood which renews the vigor of the towns. The tenacious spiritual ideals of the open country constitute our most resisting barrier against the growing laxity and luxury of our social organization. It is the country church rather than the city church which is in fact our best defense against the advance of the evils of our time.

The country church can be made again what it was during the early days in New England, the strongest power not only for righteousness, which it is now, but also for the general success of country life and for the welfare of country communities. I believe that we are standing to-day on the threshold of a great movement which will bring back to the church in the open country and in the smaller towns the greater power for good which it used to have, and so will lead, both spiritually and materially, to a new and better country life. The country church can and should be the first and strongest of all agencies in furthering the advance of rural civilization.

The object of our conference is to strengthen the country church. We are here to consider its present and its future, the functions it should perform, the policy it should follow, the training of its leaders, the best

ways to organize and support it. We shall discuss the performance of its spiritual task, its relation to the rural communities from which it draws its strength, and its influence toward a right solution of the social and industrial problems of rural life. In a word, we are here to ascertain how best the country church can help to bring about better farming, better business, and better life, including religion, in the country. Nothing that touches for good or evil the life of the country people can be alien to the country church.

We are here also to call the attention of the Christian people of the United States to the existence of the country church problem, and to ask them to consider with us the needs of the country church, to find out how best to meet these needs, how to strengthen and vitalize, and, above all, how to fit the country church for the actual modern task with which it is face to face.

This conference, called by the Commission on Church and Country Life of the Federal Council of Churches, is the result, not merely of the work of the Commission, but also of the far larger work, both in amount and time, which preceded the creation of the Commission, one year ago. It may be said to trace its origin in part to the Roosevelt Commission on Country Life, in part to the admirable work of the Presbyterian Church acting through Dr. Warren H. Wilson, in part to that of Dr. George Frederick Wells for the Federal Council of Churches, and especially to the epoch-making investigations by the present Secretary of the Commission, the Rev. Charles Otis Gill, of

the conditions and needs of the country church in parts of Vermont and New York, and to the continuance of these investigations in Ohio. But these are far from being all. Our obligation is great to progressive country ministers and ecclesiastical superintendents; to the Men and Religion Movement in the Methodist Church and among the Disciples of Christ and the Baptists of New York and elsewhere; to the work of the Home Missions Council; to the social service work of the Moravians and the Christians; to the Country Young Men's Christian Association; and to the work of others whom I have not named.

We are not here to advocate the weakening or the strengthening of any denomination at the expense of any other, nor have we any theory to exploit or ax to grind. We merely seek the truth about conditions, and remedies that are both wise and practicable. We have come together as representatives of every phase of country life to consider and discuss cooperation for the common welfare of religious work in the country, and for the general good of the individuals and the communities which the church exists to serve. We desire the prosperity of the country church, not only for the sake of the church itself, but also for what that prosperity can be made to accomplish for the advancement of every good cause in the country.

Under modern conditions the spiritual welfare and progress attainable by any community are directly affected by its material prosperity. Without a reasonable economic margin there is seldom an efficient organized religious life. Good farms often mean good

churches, and poor farms almost always mean weakness and inefficiency in the country church. Where the means for the support of the church are lacking, its spiritual efficiency may be directly in question. For its own sake the country church is deeply interested in the economic success of its people. It is still more deeply interested for the sake of the people themselves.

The problems which confront us can no more be solved by the individual country church, or by the country churches of any one denomination, than the problems of rural life can be solved by the owner of any one farm, or the farmers of any one state. In this as in all other undertakings among men union is strength. We work to best advantage when we work together.

If cooperation among country churches for the general welfare of the work is sound and wise, and if cooperation among farmers will lead to a stronger and richer spiritual, mental, and physical life on the farm, then the country church as a whole is interested in cooperation among farmers. I do not contend that the church should take the functions of the grange or of the agricultural school, but I do believe that the frequent failure of the country churches through their ministers to get into productive touch with the work and the needs of the country people is one of the fundamental reasons for the present weakness of the country church.

The movement we are met to further is sound and practical in its purpose, and deeply needed. The work which lies before the country church may well be sec-

ond to no other in the power of its thrust toward a social order founded on the ethics of Jesus Christ.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

W. F. Richardson

In the creed known as the Thirty-nine Articles, the church is defined as follows: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." Accurate as this definition may be, as far as it goes, it is not complete without some such addition as, "and by which the work of Jesus Christ in and for the world is being done." The *faithful men* who compose the Church of Christ must not only hear the Word, and observe the sacraments, but bring the life of their Lord to bear upon the world, and more especially upon the immediate community for which they are most largely responsible. The community does not exist for the church, but the church for the community. Like her Lord, the church exists in the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give up her life for the ransoming of men. The great church is the church that most effectively serves men.

A community is "a group of people living together,"

whether in city, village, or country. The church in such a community must be directly interested in all the life of all the people who make up its population. Their homes, their occupations, their schools, their habits of life, their ideals of character, all must be the concern of the church. May it not be that much of the decadence of the country church is due to its neglect of this divine law, and its effort to build itself up at the expense of the community, instead of building up the community at the cost of its own sacrificial service?

What is the present status of the country church? A few suggestive facts may be cited, as a partial answer. A few days ago an Associated Press dispatch announced briefly some results of a survey by the commission under whose auspices we are met to-day. A study of rural church life in the state of Ohio led to their report, that one in nine of the country churches of this state had been abandoned during the past few years; that only one in three of the remainder was increasing in membership; and that two thirds of them had ceased growing or were slowly dying. The Presbyterian Church has recently conducted a similar survey, within several states, from Pennsylvania to Missouri, through their Department of Church and Country Life. This has led them to like results. In the prosperous state of Iowa the rural churches of one district reported a decrease in membership, in contributions, in resources, and in value of church buildings, and an increase of debt, all in the same year. The Disciples of Christ, a religious body which is distinctly

rural in its predominant membership, is facing a critical situation in its country churches. Seventy-five per cent. of its congregations and over forty per cent. of its membership are in these scattered churches. A large proportion of these churches have preaching but once a month, and their activities are often limited to the occasion of this monthly visit and the Sunday worship of that one day. The total annual budget of these "quarter time" congregations averages but $250, of which amount $150 is paid to the preacher, $37.50 is spent for a revival meeting, $25 is expended upon the Sunday-school, $20 goes for incidentals, and $17.50 is contributed to missions and benevolences. In view of these figures, it is plain to be seen that such churches are not building up their communities to any considerable extent nor even themselves making any perceptible growth.

Too many country churches have no larger ideal than to maintain Sunday services, more or less regularly, and a Sunday-school that closes during the winter months, and to have an annual revival meeting. Its ministry to the social, or neighborhood, life is seldom more than an occasional basket dinner or picnic, a possible social or two in the winter, perhaps a sewing society for the women and a mission band for the younger children,—and a constant watch over the young people, to prevent their enjoyment of those "worldly amusements" toward which the church holds the unvarying attitude of hostility, and in the discussion of which they are wont to condense the decalogue of moral principles into the monologue of "Don't."

What more than they *are* doing may the country churches do for their several communities?

First, there should be constant and sympathetic co-operation between city and country churches. The oft-occurring jealousy with which the country church regards the city church, which is sometimes met by the ill-concealed contempt of the latter for the former, is as unfortunate as it is unholy. The city church is swiftly becoming an expert in certain forms of community service, from which the rural churches might well learn something of how to do their task. While the environment is entirely different, the human nature with which each has to deal is exactly the same. Then, too, the country is constantly contributing to the young and aggressive life of the city, into which flows a steady stream that by its very volume threatens to make the current of urban life a destructive torrent. Ninety per cent. of the ministers and missionaries of the church come from rural and village communities. And it is a fact well known among social workers that many of the young men and women who come from the farms into the city help to fill the ranks of those who fall victims to the evil forces of our modern society. If every boy and girl from the farm and country hamlet were accompanied by a letter from the rural church to the city church with which it is in regular correspondence, it would save many a life to the virtues of the home and the kingdom of heaven.

The country church must study its local environment with the view of adapting its ministry thereto. The Salt River Presbytery in Missouri, a rural pres-

bytery, finding that it had during the last ten years lost twenty per cent. in membership, adopted the following recommendation: "We recommend that the churches concern themselves with the farmer's road to the nearest village, as well as his road to Glory Land. We recommend that they concern themselves with the task of promoting cooperative business among the farmers. We recommend that they help in the war against disease. And, wherever there is such need, we recommend that they make provision for the social life of their people and provide wholesome recreation." Is there a single item in this statement that does not concern the church of the country district? Good roads are as essential to the requirements of religious worship and social brotherhood as to the profits of the field and orchard. Cooperation of the farmers in their business life will directly minister to their spirit of social fellowship. Their united war against disease will teach them new values in the life that now is and certainly detract nothing from the value of that which is to come.

The country church must provide for the social life of the community. Rowdyism and immorality among the young are due to misdirected energy. Young life will not be inactive. The school and church are the two natural social centers, and the church ought to feel the double compulsion of human want and divine love. To neglect the young is to invite their contempt for the church. A study of ninety-one rural churches in Indiana showed that twenty-five of them had not one male communicant under twenty-one. In Illinois, only

thirteen per cent. of the young people were found attending the Sunday-school. In Maryland, fifty-seven per cent. of the rural churches have no sort of organization for the young people of their communities. In the cities, the Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association contribute their splendid ministries to young life; but *there* is just where the churches are themselves doing most to meet this demand. In the country little chance is given for such unsectarian service, because the churches are too feeble to undertake the work alone, and have too much of the sectarian spirit to attempt to do it together. Why should not the country churches unite to do such work in an effective way? Then they could have their baseball clubs, Scout bands, debating societies, stereopticon lectures, lyceum courses, and, everywhere, nature study, that noblest pathway of all in which to lead the young mind and heart up to a knowledge of and love for the Creator and Father of all. If there could be an elimination of some of the superfluous church organizations in the rural districts, it would help to attain this end. In the heart of Missouri, in one of its richest counties, there are sixty-seven country churches, or one for every forty-six farm families. One fourth as many would be ample to meet the needs of the county. There is but one resident pastor among the sixty-seven churches. Many of them are ministered to by preachers who travel weary miles to bring them the monthly sermons upon which they try to live their feeble lives. Cooperation and consolidation or lingering decay and final death must be the result of

such conditions. These churches must cease to be rivals and become partners, or God will smite them with barrenness and death. In many cities the people are drawing more closely together in their social and community life. Witness the community Christmas trees in Washington City, New York, Houghton, Michigan, and other larger and smaller communities. With ringing of the church bells and the singing of Christmas carols by chorus choirs, in which the hosts that crowd the streets join lustily, the birthday of our Lord is ushered in, and the brotherhood of men is made a blessed fact of consciousness to thousands of human hearts. Why should not this become the universal practise among the churches that minister to the scattered brothers and sisters in our Father's family?

That such ministry to the community on the part of the country church is not an "irridescent dream" is shown by many encouraging facts. The country churches are waking to their opportunity and duty, and in many quarters there is fruitful activity in the direction of social betterment. In a general way it may be said that in many cases where abandoned country churches draw forth the unfavorable comment of the passer-by, investigation shows that the old building has been left for a new and better one, adapted to modern methods of church activity, and put to generous use for service to all around it. With the growth in wealth and increasing thrift in many rural districts, the farmers drive their carriages and automobiles into the adjacent towns, where their children attend the high school, and their families are enabled

to enjoy the ministry of abler preachers than they were permitted to hear in the old country meeting-houses. To quote the language of the editor of a great religious weekly, written to a friend: "What I told you even two years ago would not be true to-day. The tide has turned, and religion has taken a fresh grip on the country, where it seemed about to let go."

Let us come to specific instances, of which there are not a few. In the rural village of Maroa, Macon County, Illinois, the Presbyterian Church has a gymnasium, free baths, and a public reading-room; conducts a cooking class for girls and women; makes regular use of a stereopticon and moving-picture machine; and has given its basement story to the school authorities to relieve the pressure on the public schools of the surrounding district. This is a fine specimen of community building.

At Yancey, in the western Blue Ridge district of Virginia, was a rural mission church to which there came, in 1905, a young and ardent home missionary, the Rev. Mr. Ellis. He found a community steeped in ignorance and cursed by wretched poverty. Their homes were poor and unsanitary, their fields half-cultivated, their children growing up without education or moral and spiritual training. One small school-room, where an average of fifteen children listlessly studied for but five months out of the year, was the only chance for education afforded by the community. He opened a school in the church building he erected, making it a social center to which all the people were made welcome. Soon there were from eighty to ninety

pupils, who sought to prolong the brief term of study by several months. He raised money to build a modern three-room schoolhouse and hitched it up with the public school system of the state. This school is now graded from the kindergarten through the eighth grade, employing five competent teachers. He established sewing classes for mothers and daughters, and their calico wrappers and sunbonnets are now replaced with better and more attractive garments. Underclothing was unknown among the people until his school began making such garments for the children, to their universal delight and comfort. The first undergarments the mothers saw they looked upon with amazement, asking, "What are they for?" By cooking classes the mothers have been instructed in the preparation of palatable and nourishing food to take the place of the former universal diet of greasy pork and corn pone. Homes and public buildings have been put in sanitary condition, and noticeable improvement in the health of the entire community has resulted. In a neighboring district an Episcopal Church sustains an emergency hospital, where lives are often saved by reason of its accessibility in cases of accident or sudden illness. It needs no saying that the comforts of the homes have been greatly increased; carpets, stoves, and other common necessities, once unknown, are found almost everywhere. Like transformations are being wrought in many neighborhoods, in sundry states of our Union. These will suffice as examples of what is possible in community building, to the country church that is conscious of and faithful to its mission.

In closing, let me say that, in my judgment, the solution of this problem waits upon the provision of an adequate pastoral care for the country church. And this depends upon an adequate education of a ministry for the rural field. It is not necessary that the country pastor should be a specialist in agriculture or in stock-raising. But he must know something of the elements that enter into the daily life and toil of his parishioners, he must be familiar with such sociological principles as enter into community life, and he must have a heart full of sympathy with and interest in the children of the soil. Prof. Alva W. Taylor, of the Missouri Bible College, in his "Bulletin No. 1 of the Commission of Social Service and the Rural Church, of the Disciples of Christ," says: "The ultimate hope of the rural church, as of every church, and of the school, and of every other public institution, is in an educated leadership. . . . The first requisite lies in the seminary and college that trains the ministry. The pastor needs a knowledge of the field as well as of the things he is to preach. . . . If we are to have an educated rural ministry, we must have an education for the rural ministry; that means a curriculum that gives the knowledge of sociology and of rural life, as well as of theology and sermonizing." It is well that certain of our educational institutions are turning their attention toward the supplying of this need. Every such institution that devotes special attention to the training of the gospel ministry ought to endeavor to lend a hand in fitting our country churches better to fulfil

their task of building up the communities where the Lord of the church has planted them.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY CENTER

(Report of Committee)

Edwin L. Earp, *Chairman,* Edmund de S. Brunner, Fred Eastman, C. J. Galpin, A. R. Mann, Anna B. Taft.

The subject of this report, as we understand it, refers to the church in the rural community, or it may imply the task of the country church in creating a community where there is none, or the task of giving Christian leadership to a community already socially conscious, but in danger, as in some cases, of becoming pagan unless the church fulfils its function.

Clarence Poe says, "The chief task of the rural reformer to-day is the creation of the rural community." Mr. George W. Russell, in *The Irish Homestead,* says, "The difficulty of moving the countryman, which has become traditional, is not due to the fact that he lives in the country, but to the fact that he lives in an unorganized society." Why are we focusing our attention to-day upon the rural life of the nation? Because it not only includes over one half (fifty-three per cent.) of the population of this country, but it also represents

the great resource field of the nation's wealth. It is here also we discover such splendid heroic individuality as has produced the largest percentage of moral, religious, industrial, and political leadership of all the ages, and yet at the same time we discover national waste of resources, natural, human, and spiritual, because here we find the least of community interest and cooperation.

Why are we discussing so often in these days the problems of the country church? Because in many sections of our country it presents to us one of the most difficult mission fields of the world to cultivate because, like the slums of the great cities, it is a lost home field. As one goes back to his home county in the rural sections of the eastern, southern, and some of the middle western states, what does he discover? The splendid old circuit system broken up and the fires of religious fervor gone out upon many abandoned church and family altars, and the message of the minister in the neglected pulpit of the dilapidated church building about as effective in creating a community spirit as the noise of a lone woodpecker on a dead tree in a swamp. Why is this so? Because of population change through population movement, while there has been little if any change in the methods of church work to meet the changing needs of these localities. The country church of the pioneer period selected methods and men to meet the needs of that time. The country church of to-day will succeed when it adopts this policy. Then the preacher was a moving tie; to-day he must be the central cell of a new social

nucleus. The circuit system in most rural communities has ceased to be effective as it was then. The meeting-house (may we preserve the idea if not the name) is still essential; but it must be more than a meeting-place—it must become the center for the organized expression of the whole community life. The circuit rider was a heroic and necessary social agent then; he is so no longer. To-day we need a new heroic type of country preacher who has the courage to stay camped in one community until by religious instruction and social service he has, like John Frederick Oberlin, built up in one whole sweep of country a new rural civilization in which the character of Christ is the badge of good citizenship.

The country preacher of to-day confronting his task, hard as it may seem, must have the vision of his church as a community center and the sense of personal responsibility as to his work as the prophet Isaiah had in reference to the religious center of a rural folk living in a territory no larger than the state of New Jersey: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth" (Isa. lxii. 1). Here we get the conception that the church is an attractive force and a saving agency in the community in which the man of God most profitably can invest his whole life.

We wish to present as briefly as possible (1) The Community Church as it should be, (2) The Social Center Parish Plan, (3) Some encouraging examples

of Community Serving Churches, (4) Recommendations, (5) References to Literature on the subject.

I. The Church in the Community

Keep in mind the declaration of the prophet given above. The church in the first place should stand as an *attractive force* in the community. Its building and equipment, its organization, its policy, the things for which it stands, its ideals for membership and work should all be arranged with the view of attracting the people of the community, "Until her righteousness go forth as brightness."

The greatest peril the church of the present has to face in the community is not the hostility of the people, but their indifference; the peril of unattractiveness to those who need her fellowship—the peril of being let alone by the multitudes. The building should be so constructed as to attract the people. The work should be so organized as to render service to the entire community. If there should exist any form of unrighteousness in the community, the church should be so organized as to create a public opinion that will hit it hard, remove the evil, and establish righteousness.

Her policy should not be that of a class-conscious group, but rather that of the community spirit which stands for social justice. The community church must have an ideal that should be more attractive at least than the platform of any political party, or social organization, or socialistic program.

In the second place the church should be a saving agency, an active power in the community. (Until

her salvation go forth as a lamp that burneth.) This, of course, involves what the church proposes to do in the community.

Its first task should be the endeavor to reconcile the erring souls to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, but more and more in our time should the church perform her teaching function by acquainting the children at the earliest possible moment with Jesus Christ their Savior. This can be done by the well-organized Sunday-school, and by special emphasis upon parental obligation in the home. Later, when we get over the selfishness of sectarianism, we shall be able to organize adequately for religious instruction in connection with the public school system.

The church should become a saving agency also by organizing the recreational and play life of the people. It should stand for wholesome and clean amusement halls and the organized playground for school and community at large.

The church should seek to give a religious significance to all the legitimate forms of social service in the community by furnishing intelligent Christian leadership; for example, in the work of the department of public health, the enforcement of welfare legislation, the prosecution of the procurer in vice, and in the support of all good means for the betterment of the life of the wage-earner, and the men and women in public employment.

In fact the time has come when the church can no longer maintain its self-respect unless it burns as a

lamp of righteousness in making quick the public conscience with regard to human rights and social justice.

If we are ever to have the rule of Christ in human society—which means the kingdom of God on earth—we must have every man and woman doing the necessary and legitimate work of the world with the consciousness that it is a part of the work of the kingdom. This was Paul's ideal when he said, "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." The church-members who have helped to formulate the program of the church for the community must stand together for action that will count in making the work of the church real in the community.

In the well-organized community church it is no longer possible for the membership to stand idle in the market-place of Christian work and say, "No man hath hired us," for there is some form of activity in the church's program in which every member can take an active part; and, besides, we are still left that broad range of individual initiative to keep ourselves active in doing the work of the kingdom so that we will be without excuse.

The time has gone by when enlightened people are going to be satisfied merely with church buildings and programs. When Jesus announced his great social program from a pulpit in Capernaum, the people said, "What gracious words proceed from his mouth!" But Jesus said, "To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." We are not to stop there: we must so speak and act—the church of the community must

so organize its forces and work that the people will be compelled to say, "To-day is Christ's program being carried out in our community."

INDIVIDUAL VIEWS OF THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY CENTER

Anna B. Taft

The first element in the church as a community center is that its service should be to the whole community: the translating of the gospel to the neighborhood through its members and organizations. It can attain this end best by ministering, as our Lord ministered, to those in danger in the community, by the saving of whom the prosperity and wholesomeness of the community are assured. These are usually the young people, newcomers, the poor, the defective, and the sick. For the young, the church should recognize and minister to the natural social and religious instinct of the boys and girls; supply them with wholesome forms of recreation through organized play, clubs, and socials of various kinds; and provide opportunities for religious education and worship.

For newcomers, the church should provide such fostering care and welcome that they soon may become residents having a part and interest in upbuilding the kingdom in the community.

For the poor, she should offer such ministry in the community that actual cases of want may be met by the church and should establish such a neighborhood life that poverty will be abolished, and the gospel of a just economic condition will be established.

For the sick and defective, she should furnish such care as isolated cases demand and conduct such a campaign for public health as shall abolish illness, as far as possible, from the community.

In the open country and small village the numerous religious and welfare organizations of the city and large town are unnecessary and impracticable. The church can be the community center. Where there is more than one church, they should work together for the common good of the community, but when this is impossible, each church should make its service contribute to the welfare of the community as a whole.

A. R. Mann

Every church is a community center in some degree, for the fact that it represents a group interest constitutes it a center around which persons sharing this interest in sufficient degree group themselves. It seems to me that this constitutes the basis on which its influence as a community center is to be extended. Only in so far as persons in the community can be brought to share in this interest will the church be a group center for them. The church must begin, therefore, by thoroughly leavening its present group, and by gradual accretion extend its circle of influence.

The gradual working out of a consistent program from within will, I believe, accomplish both more effective and more permanent results than any grandstand plan or assumption of community leadership. Viewing the situation from this standpoint will aid also in determining the possible limits to which the

church can become a center, by revealing at once certain groups or interests that cannot reasonably be expected to be brought into the circle of interest about a given Protestant church under our present organization. The larger community of interest cannot be assumed; it must be fostered and often created. The church has a particularly vulnerable point of approach because it has an appeal to the emotional and sentimental nature of man, through which the higher spiritual nature may be aroused.

In order that a church may become a community center in any large way it must engage a ministry capable of discovering the community interests and tendencies in their pure form, of ascertaining the purposes for which men come together in the community, and how the church can intelligently cooperate in the furthering of those interests so far as they are legitimate. A thorough and appreciative understanding of the interests that move the community is a first step, and the necessary foundation of any progress. Only thus can the church know what activities it should immediately promote or what it should leave to other agencies.

Many churches will have to be content with being a community center. Some, under special favorable circumstances, can attain unto the community center. There should be caution not to seek self-aggrandizement at the expense of the highest welfare of the community or other existing interests. A church that undermines another legitimate institution to promote its own needs is likely to fail in the effort. The church

should be viewed as a means, not as an end in itself. Many a church has gone on the rocks through making itself an end rather than a means. It can attain its highest service side by side with other legitimate interests.

Community center means not, as many have thought, the bringing of everything into the church, but rather spreading the influence of the church out into the community and into everything affecting men's lives. The "bringing in" idea tends to make the church an end in itself. The "bringing in" will be an inevitable result of spending itself in service.

A church that is to be a center must consent to a wider and freer use of its plant than is often the case. An over-restrictive policy here is hurtful to the venture. Frequently the parsonage can supplement the church in this respect; the parsonage contributes much to the social center at the church, and we must conceive of the parsonage in a larger way. The human touch is here, and persons respond freely to the human element. For some purposes the parsonage can be made very much less impersonal than the church building. The houses of members are a close second to the parsonage. The best center is where persons live. The church can multiply its centrality through an intelligent use of its constituent homes. To many persons the church building is too impersonal. By advocating such use I do not mean to lessen the wider use of the church plant, but to supplement it.

A center must have continuity. No success follows centers with short pastorates. The possibility of being

a center is directly proportional to the length of pastorates. Hence, also, arises the importance of members' homes in helping to carry over changes in pastorates.

The church should seek to set forward the larger influences that will tie a community into a real group and thus aid in a complete community socialization. What these influences are will have to be determined for each locality. Federation of local forces for community building will often be a needed task.

Edmund de S. Brunner

The church is a part of the community and as such depends upon it for support and constituency. Every phase of community life, whether it will or not, rests on the church.

Ideally the church should affect all the adverse elements in the community life rather than be affected by them. The struggle toward this goal will involve a number of things. The church must have a sympathetic interest in the economic, recreational, educational, hygienic, civic, and moral life of its community.

This means that the church will be the spiritual dynamo, furnishing its members with power adequate to the task of bringing the Christ spirit into all phases of community life. The high responsibility of the church is ever for spiritual leadership equal alike to the heights and depths of human experience as well as to the level of each day's need.

But it must also mean much more. The church may have to translate its sympathy with community life in

terms of service for it as an organization. Lacking another place, it should open its doors to community meetings of every worthy description. It should place its plant in the hands of the community as a recreational asset, even though this may mean enlarging the building; and in other ways it should meet all those needs which, unmet, would react for ill upon the life of the community and thus upon the church.

Conditions Favorable to Rural Church Centers

C. J. Galpin

A community church.—The most favorable condition for a church center is the existence of only one church in the territory, either large neighborhood in open country, or community of village center type, where the church is well thought of, is backed by all elements of the population, and is willing to assume leadership in providing the building and equipment for the people's social life and general recreative and informing enterprises.

Clergyman a social middleman.—The clergyman is in a sense a public servant paid by the people, and should have many qualifications for social welfare leadership. Where he has the confidence of his community as well as of his parish, he has opportunity for the use of all his social surplus energy.

Family ideal.—The permanence and organization of the church, comprising as it does the family circle, and open as it is to all ages and both sexes, especially adapt it to become the medium of a democratic social

life, providing it has the liberality of view which will open its building to all wholesome interests of the people on the land.

A means of strength to the church.—A favorably situated church, holding undisputed religious guardianship in its region, if strong enough not to be swept away from its moral and religious obligations by assuming aggressive social obligations to its people, might very easily find that it has a new lease of life and power in this added responsibility.

It doubtless would be well to call attention to the fact that just as the home has served a great function as a place where boys and girls can get acquainted at close hand under working conditions and intimate living conditions with different individual types of personalities, and thereby come to incorporate through imagination and sympathy into their own mental habit a completer racial life, so the church has always served the social function of bringing families of different types together for acquaintanceship under auspices sometimes quite spiritual, at other times quite ordinary. Probably for at least a generation now, this function in the country, where acquaintance with human life is narrow, somewhat shallow, and somewhat petty, should be emphasized. In fact it can hardly be overdone. This is why the country church should make special occasions of as wide and varied a character as possible to bring together people of many kinds and occupations, so as to elevate the human experience of country life.

AFTER ONE YEAR OF SUCCESS IN A COMMUNITY CHURCH CENTER—THE YEAR AHEAD

Fred Eastman

Will you let me give you my dream for the year ahead? I see a church working with the same purpose —binding together all the divergent elements of our changing population in Christian fellowship. I see a band of women working faithfully, cheerfully on, meeting together, planning festivals, picnics, and entertainments, providing the children with the things that make glad the heart of childhood and the grown-ups with the things that only women can provide. I see a Sunday-school one hundred and twenty strong, studying together, under the guidance of conscientious and earnest teachers, lessons that make for nobility and strength of character. I see a crowd of men and women filling this church, listening to lectures that interest and inspire and arouse debates, and to music that thrills and touches the most solemn chords of our being. I see a music secretary in the community, leading and directing not only the music in this church but in the glee club and public school and the whole neighborhood. I see a choir of fifty children crowding that little balcony, a choir the freshness and sweetness of whose voices will set these walls ringing with their glad harmony. We will have musical services here—vesper and evening songs sung by the children. And I see the response which these services will call forth from the hearts of this community. I see our church

filled to the doors; I see men and women coming here and hear them saying to one another that they would rather be here when our doors are open than anywhere else in the community, for it is here that they find rest and peace and inspiration. They shall call it their home—their House of Service.

II. The Social Center Parish Plan

Fred Eastman

It should be acknowledged at the outset that the old circuit system was of great service in the pioneer period and even later in the development of the country church in America. It should also be granted that the circuit system is still a practicable method in many parts of the rural domain even to-day, especially in the newer and sparsely settled regions. But, on the other hand, it should be frankly admitted by every one who knows the facts that the changed conditions in our rural life demand a change in our methods of ministering to the people.

The emphasis of church work is no longer merely upon the saving of individuals but also upon the saving of the community; and, in a large sense, the saving of our rural civilization from becoming pagan. Furthermore, some of our leading thinkers and writers on the rural situation declare that it will soon be a question of whether the churches in the rural districts will be able to save themselves if the present condition and methods of church life continue. Professor Carver says: " Unless the church makes itself a posi-

tive factor in the building up of the rural community and rural civilization, it will have to get out. And in the main the church must rebuild the rural community through its own members by making them better farmers, better citizens, of more value to the community." [1]

To save individuals, to save the community, and to save itself the country church must adopt an adequate plan to meet the demands of modern rural community needs. In my judgment that plan best suited to function in this field is what I call the social center parish plan, or the circular system, as a substitute for the old circuit system. I shall discuss this subject from the point of view (1) of the plan, (2) of its value as a socializing agency, and (3) of its method of working.

I. THE PLAN

The plan involves four essential things, the first to be a thorough *social survey*. The survey is so necessary and fundamental that it must take precedence of the other three. These are a *chart,* or map of the entire parish or community, a *program* of work covering the details of the chart, and a *staff of workers* with voluntary or paid assistants.

(1) The social survey should include all the facts of the community: (*a*) those that may be termed the assets, or life-giving and community-serving resources; (*b*) those that may be termed liabilities; that is, those that are life-destroying, or community-destroying factors. It should be a geological, biological, demo-

[1] *Rural Church Message*, p. 115.

graphical, and sociological, as well as religious, survey of the entire community.

(2) The chart, or map, should be carefully made upon such a scale that every member of the parish can understand it. It should be put in usable form for distribution, but especially should it be placed in the pastor's study, or in the assembly hall, where the facts of the community as well as of individual interest and responsibility can be pointed out.

It should not only mark out the present location of farmhouses, schools, stores, shops, churches, roads, the best soils adapted to certain crops, etc., but it should include also the desirable location of these buildings and the places where roads ought to be changed, or reconstructed, or graded; those in which new bridges should be built, and where all public improvements should be made. All these should be so carefully and graphically presented by charts, photographs, and lettering that it would be a means of public education in what the community ought to be. Striking contrasts of what is and what ought to be in rural life can be very easily and cheaply presented by paper and ink, or by photographs and posters. And these are often more convincing and saving than *some* sermons I have heard in rural churches.[1]

(3) A program of work. To illustrate: I have in my mind our summer camp all charted and mapped out, and a program of work for the next year, and

[1] For a good community map see "The Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community," by Prof. C. J. Galpin, Research Bulletin No. 34, Madison, Wisconsin.

perhaps for several years. I know all the dead trees that need to be cut next summer, the stumps and stones I want to remove from the soil, the paths I am going to make in the woods, the kind of treatment the soil of the garden requires, the kind of boat-house I want to build, the color and quality of the paint to be put on the buildings, and many other details. So the rural leader of the social center parish should have outlined a program of work so that he will not only see things done in the community, but will actually get the young life at work, in order that it may function in the essentials of rural leadership and community service. How are you going to keep the boys in the church and train them for real service in the Kingdom? That should be planned out before there is a tendency for the group to lapse from the Sunday-school and to leave the farm for a prodigal experience.

How are you going to keep that rich old lady, a little eccentric perhaps, from leaving her property to the endowment of a dog kennel or a feline sanitarium, and persuade her, instead, to endow some scholarships for the country boys in some form of research that will help the community, or to give it for the employment of a young man or a young woman to supervise the play life of the community, so that the children will not fight like cats and dogs at their play? In every detail of community betterment this plan makes possible a program and opens up the way to performance.

(4) A staff of workers. This is absolutely necessary, and where volunteers cannot be had it will re-

quire a paid staff, such as the County Work Department is putting into some of the communities through its statesmanlike program for rural community betterment.

The graduates of the agricultural college and rural high school can be enlisted for this kind of work. Instead of trying to get every young man to express his religious experience in the same way, as in my boyhood days, we will come up to the position of Paul in recognizing that in the work of the Kingdom there are varieties of gifts but the same spirit.

So I would have a specialist on soils, one on plant pests and diseases, one on stock-breeding and dairying, one on rural home planning, one on hygiene and sanitation, one on recreation and amusement in rural communities, one on religious education and adolescence, and one on any other important phase of the community need brought out in the survey and charted in the program.

2. ITS VALUE AS A SOCIALIZING AGENCY

Such an institution as the rural church organized on the social center parish plan has two essential social aims as its function in the community: (1) to socialize the community in consciousness, (2) to socialize the community in its activity.

(1) *Socializing a community in consciousness.*—A community is socialized in consciousness when it comes to acknowledge the necessary facts in social evolution of the need for social cleavage in community-building, and at the same time develops that

social sympathy which keeps these class-conscious groups in sympathetic cooperation with each other in carrying on the work necessary to the fullest life of the community. In other words, the church should so broaden the people's definition of the kingdom of God on earth that every man and woman who is doing a necessary part of the world's work which has to do with the health and happiness of the community as a whole may be conscious of doing the work of the Kingdom, and should, therefore, receive a just share of the rewards society offers of social esteem and of economic values, wages, or goods, produced by labor of whatever sort. With such a chart and program as I have described above, it would not be difficult to develop such a social consciousness in the minds of all the people of the parish.

(2) *Socializing a community in activity.*—When is a community socialized in activity? When, awakened to the consciousness of its needs, it has developed adequate organization of its population, invented efficient social machinery, and trained effective social engineers to make use of its available resources for all the people within the community so that they will be in possession of that equality of opportunity which means, not the chance to secure control of resources and exploit them for personal or for corporate ends, but the equality of opportunity to secure for each a just share of the products of industry through distribution according to the measure of services rendered. In other words, a community is socialized when it has developed a social medium through which

there is a reciprocal correspondence between human needs and available resources.

To me this is, in brief, the function of the country church as a socializing agency in the building up of the community life that will correspond to the New Testament conception of the kingdom of God on earth.

3. METHOD OF WORKING THE PLAN

No plan, however scientific and workable, will work itself. It has to be worked, and the man who works it must have the essential elements of social leadership in his makeup.

(1) Such a plan must have a leader who loves work, who can sense the needs of a community, who has a constructive imagination, and who has will power, or a persistent purpose to succeed when he knows he is right.

(2) It requires an adequate *financial plan* of support. A fool project may succeed if properly financed, while a reasonable plan may fail if not properly financed. In most communities the people will pay for what they get if they are convinced the goods are worth the money. Sometimes it is necessary to introduce the goods by gift, or cut the price to one half the value. So in some rural communities it will be necessary at first to get financial support for the central parish plan from private gifts or from denominational funds outside the community to be served. The County Work Department has demonstrated the feasibility of this plan.

(3) Such a plan on a large scale involves a more

statesmanlike policy of the administration of home missions and church extension funds by some of the Protestant denominations than has been evident hitherto. Instead of doling out drips to defunct churches in over-churched communities, or for petty plans for new enterprises of little importance, if these boards would set aside a fund for establishing a few central parishes in communities that would act as imitation centers for other communities, it seems to me we would make greater progress in home missions and church extension than we are now making under our present policy, which we have inherited from the pioneer past.

(4) Cooperation by overhead organizations of Home Missions Boards for the country church should be secured as a definite policy for rural communities: (*a*) by dividing the rural field into "spheres of influence," as has been done in the foreign field, and recently in Mexico by foreign mission boards. This would apply especially to rural fields not yet churched. (*b*) By getting common consent to unite where the people can be persuaded to follow the lead, leaving the responsibility of administration to the denomination agreed upon by the people; (*c*) by adopting the "*give and take*" principle as between the denominations on reciprocal terms, for different communities, where, in the one, denomination "A" is stronger than denomination "B," and in the other, denomination "B" is stronger than denomination "A." Here we have an exchange which leaves both denominations equally strong as a whole, and locally stronger because of the

elimination of competition and waste. This applies only to fields where there is competition or stagnation; where this cannot be secured the overhead organizations should agree (*d*) to adopt the law of adaptation to environment, or the law of the survival of the fittest, and help the church that is willing to organize its work on a community basis; that is, with the aim to serve the whole community without reference to denomination, and then let the others die, or hustle to do likewise.

III. Examples of Community Serving Churches

It will not be possible within the limits of this report to give a very large list of the country churches already organized on the Social Center Parish Plan and doing successful work as community centers.

Typical examples may be found described by Dr. Warren H. Wilson in *The Church at the Center,* chapter IV, and in *The Church of the Open Country,* chapter VIII.

1. One of the most successful is the Presbyterian Church at Hanover, New Jersey, under the leadership of the pastor, the Rev. R. H. M. Augustine. Here we see a splendid old parish with a central church building in a territory given largely to dairying, truck farming, and fruit-growing, and surrounded by four smaller centers each with a chapel where a Sunday-school is conducted in the afternoons, and where preaching is held in the afternoon or evening. The parish has a thriving agricultural league and a cow-testing associa-

tion, holds community meetings in the church, and has developed a community consciousness that is being expressed in many forms of helpful service to the whole community as well as to the larger interests of the kingdom of God outside the community.

2. The Methodist Episcopal Church of Leland, Illinois, the Rev. Willis Ray Wilson, minister, is another illustration of a church that is organized on the community center basis. The work of this church is described in part in *The Church at the Center,* by Warren H. Wilson, pages 59-61. Since this was written the pastor has done even more successful work in this interesting parish.

3. The Reformed Church of Locust Valley, Long Island, New York, under the leadership of the Rev. Fred Eastman. The work of this parish and its plan of organization is described in a pamphlet entitled "A Year's Work." The problem of this successful leader was to make the "oldtimers" and the "newcomers" see that the community and its institutions are theirs, that they belong to both, and that each has a share in the responsibility for the social and moral atmosphere of the neighborhood. In this neighborhood denominational competition was given up by sister denominations as a result of splendid community leadership by the pastor of this church.

4. The Presbyterian Church, Cazenovia, New York, the Rev. Silas E. Persons, minister. The work of this community center church is described in part by the pastor in *Solving the Country Church Problem,* by Bricker, chapter XIII.

5. The Larger Benzonia Parish, in Benzie County, Michigan, the Rev. Harlow S. Mills, minister. The story of this interesting and successful community church work is told by the minister himself in *The Making of a Country Parish,* published by the Missionary Education Movement, New York.

6. One of the most interesting cases of the building up of a community center by the work of a minister with vision in a very discouraging situation on an old broken-down circuit is that of the Rev. John S. Burton, Suffern, New York (Rural Delivery). A story of this parish work is told by Fred Eastman in the *Survey* for May 23, 1914. The closing paragraph contains this interesting characterization of the force of this man as a social engineer in the community. "This little Methodist preacher is on no committee; he is not chairman, or secretary, or treasurer. He is just a sort of two-legged prayer-meeting, going about the community filling everybody full of the Holy Spirit."

7. Prof. Galpin in Bulletin 234 (January, 1914), of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Wisconsin gives the description of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Ashton, Dane County, Wisconsin, as a Rural Church Center. The parochial school building is used as a community center. Series of lectures are given by the priest to the young men of the farms on such topics as "Scientific Agriculture," "Taking the Short Course at the College of Agriculture," "Beautifying the Home and Farm," "Ornamental Shrubs and Flowering Plants."

This church maintains a parish library on country life, fairly up-to-date books on scientific agriculture, country life bulletins from the Department of Agriculture, at Washington, District of Columbia, bulletins from the State College of Agriculture, magazines, and the like.

He also describes in this bulletin the work of other denominations, such as the Pigeon Creek Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church Hall, Trempealem County, Wisconsin; Fairfield Baptist Church, Hall, Sauk County, Wisconsin, and several others.

8. The pamphlet, "Country Churches of Distinction," published by the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions, Country Church Work, gives brief sketches of fifty churches in Ohio, a large number of which are community-serving churches.

9. Many other examples could be given, but these are sufficient to encourage those who are seeking to enlarge the scope of the country churches they are serving to include the whole community.

IV. Recommendations

1. That administrative Boards of Home Missions having to do with rural fields make a more scientific study of the rural domain with reference to its actual needs, available resources, and strategic centers where permanent church enterprises of the community center type may be established. This could be done cooperatively in a comparatively brief period by the leading denominational boards without overlapping and at no great expense, if the entire rural domain were divided

into regions and surveyed by men and women of ability according to a definite plan.

2. That the Social Center Parish Plan be adopted as the ideal toward which all denominations should work. This will give a system with a central plant and staff of workers organized on the basis of service to the entire community or countryside, and so insuring community consciousness and promoting social solidarity.

3. That Home Mission Boards adopt the plan of the foreign boards in the selection and training of volunteers for the field, in order that we may make the open country as impelling as the foreign field from the new point of life investment, so that we may get the best type of leadership to enlist for the country church field.

4. That definite courses of study be given in the theological schools and in colleges and universities looking toward life-work in this field; and that courses in Rural Bible Study, as well as courses on other forms of mission work, be given by the Christian Associations in these institutions.

5. That fellowships be established for key-men in our theological seminaries who could, after graduation, spend a year or two on the study of some rural church field with the view of giving their lives to this kind of work; and that scholarships be given to some country ministers to attend a summer school on Methods in Rural Leadership and the Country Church, so that on their return they may become community leaders for the central parish or rural region.

6. That administrative overhead organizations hav-

ing to do with the expenditure of Home Mission Funds encourage the formation of a parish budget for the community center which would localize responsibility and programs and expenditure, and lead ultimately to self-support. And that no funds be appropriated to any church which has not made a survey of its field, organized its work on a community basis, and secured a staff of workers (voluntary or paid), and chosen a leader capable of organizing the work of the whole parish; unless it be a case of charity, in which case the appropriation should come from a separate fund for that purpose.

If the overhead organizations in Rural Church Work will arrange themselves upon the basis of these proposals, we believe it will not be long before this vast resource field for the nation's needs will be entirely reclaimed as a lost home field, and again will be furnishing, as in the past, the largest percentage of the economic, political, moral, educational, and religious leadership of our new civilization, which, we trust, will be the realization of our hopes—the kingdom of God come.

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THE OVERCHURCHING OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

A. W. Taylor

The rational approach to the rural church problem is through a thoroughgoing survey of the rural church situation and an analysis of the field and the forces at work. Sufficient surveys have thus far been made to indicate certain inescapable facts regarding the duplication of church efforts in the average rural community. Those who survey the whole field are agreed regarding the necessity of making the rural church a community church, and they are also agreed that there are certain fundamental weaknesses in the present institutional situation.

No city church would expect to grow and prosper without a settled pastor. Few country churches are found to possess such a pastor, although the farmer Christian is in no wise different from the city Christian in his spiritual needs, nor are his churches in any wise different in their organic needs from those of the city; yet the rural church is too small to support a settled pastor. Again, it has been found that the prosperity of the rural church is in direct ratio to the number of its services and the size of its membership; but the average rural church, whose membership runs from sixty to eighty souls, has preaching only once a month by a preacher who resides outside the community, and who gives it little if any pastoral attention. So small a church is unable to support a resi-

dent pastor or even to support a man who will give some time to pastoral work; thus without a shepherd or an organizer the life of such churches is limited to that of worship and to whatever organization may be effected by unled local workers. The neighboring town church has four to five times the membership and is thus able to support a resident pastor, to conduct services every Sunday, to have oversight, to effect permanent organizations, to rise to leadership, to train the workers, and to secure a shepherding of the flock. And through them all it has a chance to succeed. Then the impressiveness of its audiences, the formidableness and energy of its organization, the constant attention of its pastor, and the very success with which its activities are carried on begets greater success. Because it does things it is able to enlist both men and money. Activity begets greater activity and enlists both patronage and financial support. In the country small congregations beget small congregations, listless activities beget listlessness; occasional services are unable to inspire activity; little to pay for makes small challenge to generosity.

In a church survey made of Boone County, Missouri, the home of the state university, sixty-seven rural churches were found, or one to every forty-six rural families in the county. Their average membership is about eighty. Only one of them had a resident pastor, and he preached for three other churches at considerable distances. On the first of January, 1915, not one of them afforded preaching more than once each month and many of them not so often. Almost

one half of them had no Sunday-schools, and of those who did only a few kept their schools alive during the winter months. Few of them had any sort of missionary or young people's organizations. The average pastor's salary was about $200, and the budget for the entire work of the church was less than $250. There is not a single one of these churches that does not have from two to seven others within four miles of its church site. What is true of this county is true of multitudinous others. The overchurching may not be so bad in many others, but it is of like type in practically all other farming counties, and thus the situation may be said to be fairly characteristic.

Now the most primary analysis of this situation in the light of the necessities of church efficiency is convincing. There are simply too many churches for any of them to be efficient. They cannot afford resident pastors because no one of them can support a resident pastor, and no three or four of them in the same community can unite to support one because they belong to different denominations. They cannot support a live Sunday-school because there are not enough children to make a live school in each and every one of them, and inevitably the attempt of one to support a good school begets a competitive attempt in the other nearest by, and the field is divided, the cleavage running just as deep as the struggles to activity drive it. They are too much concerned about the competitive local conditions in keeping the various churches alive to have much interest in missionary work, feeling that the smallness of their membership puts upon them too

great a burden for local support. If one of them undertakes a community program, the community is immediately divided through their sectarian loyalties, and religion, instead of being the dominant force for unity in the community, becomes ofttimes the greatest force making for disunity.

This overchurched condition is a survival from the pioneer days. In earlier days the sectarian shibboleth rallied people. When the country was new, the pioneer preacher came to establish churches of his peculiar creedal persuasion. The question was not, Has this new community a church that preaches Christ? but Has it a church of our persuasion preaching Christ? Thus the various small congregations were founded side by side. In many cases the schools of these communities are taking on the modern spirit. Agriculture is catching the teaching of science. The business life of the farm is being organized upon an efficiency basis. All the other pioneer elements of community life are giving way to the better and more modern régime, but the church remains as a survival of the pioneer time. It has the same insularity and lack of missionary spirit and retains the old method of living upon preaching alone. There is danger lest the growing community spirit pass the church by. Many workers in the agricultural and rural life field have already come to regard the country church as a negligible factor in their efforts to communize rural life and found it upon a cooperative basis. The old sectarian shibboleths are failing to rally the younger generation, and there is danger lest in the slow decadence of the rural congre-

gation religion itself shall suffer. Christianity would thrive much better in the rural community with one fourth the present number of churches. The question as to which should die will not be easily settled. None will be willing to become a vicarious sacrifice to the larger religious life of the community, and it is possible that in many places they will all die together through each struggling to retain its life; thus in the struggle of churches that have ceased to function there is grave danger to the religious and moral life of the community.

One way out is suggested by those who have faith that a movement can be inaugurated at the top and the various denominations brought to agree on a reciprocity of interest through an exchange of membership in various fields; that is, by the willingness of one communion to withdraw from one field and have its communicants unite with a neighboring church, while the other communion makes a like transfer in another field. There are many difficulties in the way of this solution: the more dogmatically inclined denominations will refuse to enter such a reciprocal arrangement; the more democratic and congregationally organized communions have no machinery able to accomplish it, and any attempt by conventions or supervisory agencies to effect it will be met with vigorous protest from the rank and file; and in most localities there will be a considerable minority that will refuse to accept such an arrangement unless it is made by the local congregations on their own initiative. The best a movement at the top can expect to do is to

agitate and educate and to effect an occasional exemplary union.

A thoroughgoing appreciation of the difficulties afforded by sectarian loyalty, independent polity, tradition, and indifference to the gravity of the situation leads one to suspect that there will have to be a sort of a "survival of the fit" selective process. The local church that arises to the demands of the situation by adopting a thoroughgoing community program will gradually draw to its support all those elements in the community life that cannot be interested in the older doctrinal and individualistic program and will also win many from their conventional loyalties to the more virile life of a socialized church. The new interest is intensely human and the old sectarian shibboleths will loose their clutch; the new program is broad and in harmony with the spirit of the age, and while it sacrifices nothing true in the old, it revivifies it with vision and a good-neighborliness that will bring the church into the spirit of the times in which we live. The process will be a slow one, no doubt, for institutions change slowly; but the institutions of religion must readapt themselves to the larger spirit and demands of the time or the old type of church will have to give way to a new and more plastic type that can better show forth the fraternity and brotherly love of Christianity and bring in the kingdom of God.

THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO THE COMMUNITY

S. K. Mosiman

The average community in the Middle States is made up of various groups of people bound together more or less strongly by ties of common interest. The stability of any particular group depends upon the strength of the interest that forms the bond of union. Time usually severs all bonds. Community groups accordingly are subject to change; they disintegrate or coalesce as interest directs. The interests that pervade and dominate any particular group are of a social rather than of an economic nature. It is always difficult to get farmers to cooperate for mutual advantage in buying or selling, or for any economic advantage or improvement. It is easy, on the other hand, for people to unite for social advantage, provided always that the interests of the different individuals and groups are common.

It is not easy to resolve a larger community into its group elements. What may be true of one community may not at all hold true of another. Few communities, however, are a unit in social interests. The community of which I wish to speak on this occasion is one that has been known to me for many years from observation. I do not claim that it is a typical community. I do claim, however, that it does show the tendency of communities to divide along the line of group interests. In this community that I have

known for forty years the following groups may be clearly traced.

Strongly marked are the nationalistic groups. Originally this community was settled by the pioneers who came in from the eastern states. Later, families from foreign lands came in, notably Germans. The original settlers built their churches, and when the Germans came in they had little in common with the old settlers. A new set of churches of various creeds took the place of the older churches. In some cases, too, the church that was displaced was of the same faith as the one that took its place. National interests and feelings were clearly the forces that held the groups together. We see here that the social instinct or feeling is stronger even than the religious. It is also stronger than the economic interests, for all the men of the community, regardless of nationality, met for transaction of business.

We notice in the next place the provincial group. Families moved into the community from a neighboring state, or from other communities in the same state. These families are not always received at once into the existing social order. They form the nucleus of a group, attracting to themselves other strangers that may come into the community.

We must note, of course, the religious groups or the denominational groups which are found in almost every larger community. Sectarian differences are not so strongly marked to-day as in former years. In some sections, however, they are still strong enough to make dividing lines for social meetings and gather-

ings. Even to-day it is difficult for an outsider or a newcomer to break into the social group of an exclusive church. People are invited to attend church services and even prayer-meetings much more readily than they are invited to participate in the social activities of the church group.

Almost every community has its non-religious group or groups. People who are out of the church are frequently found associating together. Their indifference or opposition to religion forms the bond which binds this group together. They, too, find ways and means of associating with one another and they are drawn together, not so much on account of their indifference to religion, as from the need of meeting with some one on a social basis.

Another group that may be mentioned and one that has been growing in recent years is the class group due to a division of labor. The various surveys that have been made in Ohio show that a small per cent. of the hired men go to church on Sunday. They do, however, meet on Sunday with other hired men of the community. Recently I had the experience of hearing a hired man in a certain family calling up on a Sunday morning over the telephone three or four of his associates asking them to meet him in a neighboring town, to spend the Sunday. When I asked him why he did not attend services with the family, he replied that there was no one at that church that he was acquainted with. We see here, again, that the social interests draw men together. There is also a growing disinclination on the part of landowners to

meet renters on an equal social basis. This accounts for the fact, also brought out in the survey of Ohio, that, as compared with those who own their farms, a small proportion of renters are interested in the country church.

Other groups might no doubt be found in the same community where these various groups mentioned have held sway at one time or another. But in all the groups we find the same tendency to meet on a social rather than on an economic basis. People may unite in business and in the every-day affairs of life and yet be very far apart in their sympathies, or in what they think constitutes their social interests.

It is of interest to note also that a group usually has a meeting-place, or some rallying point. The church does not afford the only meeting-place. That the church services alone do not supply every human need is clearly seen from the tendency to meet after church for a few minutes of visiting that can be seen in any typical country church. In this half hour of visiting after a church service different social groups may appear. The groups, however, that are not religious find other meeting-places. I know of a certain group who went to town on Saturday afternoon for the purpose of meeting their friends on the street as regularly as many people go to church. The saloon, the lodge or club, or even a hay-loft, may be the meeting-place to keep alive group interests.

There may be communities where these group interests are of minor importance. In the community that I have in mind, however, the church was ground

to powder between the upper and nether millstones of conflicting group interests.

Some Churches That Have Failed

When I speak of the church as having failed in this community, I am not thinking of the church of one denomination. In the community where I spent the early years of my life one may count at least ten empty country churches from the hilltop where my home was situated. These churches were of various denominations: Reformed, United Brethren, Baptist, Presbyterian, Mennonite, and others. On the whole one cannot say that they failed because the community was overchurched. Nor can one say that the ministers were not faithful, nor that the gospel was not preached. It was neither that the churches were too liberal nor too orthodox. Some of these things may have entered as contributive causes.

We are living in a time of surveys. We make a survey to ascertain the present condition of a community, or to find out the standing of a country church. If we should make a survey backward, we might learn something about the causes of the failure of these churches. As I look back with a riper experience I can now see that conflicting group interests were the chief cause of decline in every one of the churches. In each case there was a lack of connection between the old interests of the community or group and the new interests that came in. These interests were not always antagonistic, but they were unable to break through the social walls erected. In some

cases, of course, new churches took the place of the old, while in other cases a country church was absorbed by a town church. In each case, however, there was a moral loss to the community when a church failed. To some extent, of course, sectarianism contributed to the decline of certain churches. But with the change and readjustment that was constantly going on in this community there was always a large portion of the people that were outside of the church. In every case where one church was absorbed by another, or where new people came into the community and brought with them their own church, a portion of the membership of the old church lost all their church relationship and interest. This is true because they placed group interests above community interests and religious interests. But as stated before, group interests are of a social nature rather than of an economic or religious nature.

Some Successful Country Churches

The successful country church is one where the community interests and the religious interests are larger than the group interests. On a recent Sunday I attended a service at a country church that represented to me, to some extent at least, what a country church ought to be. People came in from every direction,—fathers, mothers, grandparents, and children; the whole family, in fact, came to church. The pastor informed me that so far as he knew there was not a family within a radius of five miles of the church that was not Christian and that did not attend the Sunday-

school or church. The whole atmosphere of the church spoke of prosperity and contentment. The church was in one sense a social center, ministering to the social needs of the community as well as to the spiritual, though I doubt if many of the members had ever paid much attention to what we call social service or community interests.

In central Illinois there are large communities of Mennonites and Amish. Permit me to give an illustration of one of the Amish churches and its standing in the community. In fact the church and the community are identical. These people make their church life a thing of vital importance. They have a very large church building, costing perhaps $40,000. In the church they have a very large basement that is made use of every Sunday. On a Sunday morning the families of the surrounding community may be seen going to church. As a rule, all attend. During the service some of the sisters are delegated to prepare coffee in the basement of the church. At the noon hour all partake of a common meal. After the meal another service is held in the afternoon. The church is serving the community, in that it supplies an opportunity to meet on a social basis. It is, however, an exclusive church. It may be called a Brotherhood that admits to its membership only those who accept wholly and altogether its principles. This church has solved the community problem by buying out all other landowners of the community. Incidentally they have advanced the price of land in central Illinois above that of any other community. They have solved the com-

munity problem in their own way. Their exclusiveness, however, makes it probable that their difficulties will come from within. Nevertheless, these churches do point out the way in which an ideal country church might be conducted.

I should like to mention one more church that has a membership of nearly a thousand, and a Sunday-school of more than a thousand, that is solving the country church problem. This church is in a town and has many members living in the town. A new church has been built that seats at least two thousand people. Here, too, religious interests are made the dominating force. This is possible and in a sense easy, because the people are of one nationality, and have similar interests and tastes, and social inclinations for both town and country. One can only hope that such a church will continue to hold fast to that which it has. For it the ordinary country church problem does not exist. The social needs of the community are being met without special effort at organization for the purpose.

We might examine every successful country church, and we should clearly find that in each case the community is more or less united, not only in religious views, but in their social ideas and interests as well. The aim, then, of a country church should be not only to work for unity in belief but to work to bring unity out of the social chaos that is so often found in a community.

The question arises of course as to how this can be done. I can only point out that the church should

present a program large enough to interest all the people in the whole community. Is this possible? I think it is. The last words of Jesus to his disciples were: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In these words we are told to teach all things that Jesus has commanded us. Surely in the teaching of Jesus there is a program large enough to meet every condition, even the social condition that may exist in any community. I sometimes think that we have touched only the fringes of the teachings of Jesus.

If the church wishes to have a program large enough to unify the conflicting social interests in any community, it must present large ideas. The revival of the spelling-bee, which has been tried in Ohio, will not solve the problem. Good as agencies and organizations of such nature may be to draw people together in a social way, they usually are not large enough. Especially is this true of institutions that have perished because they ceased to serve their communities.

May I just point out some of the teaching which I think should be emphasized in our churches and which is large enough to solve some of the problems?

First of these let me mention the brotherhood of man. The church has forgotten to place sufficient emphasis on the teaching of Jesus on the brotherhood

of man and especially on the brotherhood of believers. The brotherhood that Jesus came to establish is an inclusive brotherhood, not an exclusive one. It is a brotherhood which is willing to take the lowest and raise him to the level of the highest. It is a brotherhood for which there are no substitutes. No lodge or club or any sort of an organization can take the place of the brotherhood of Jesus. It rises even above sectarian and denominational lines; yes, it rises above national lines. To-day, when all the world is at war, can there be any greater need to re-emphasize and preach anew than that all men are brothers? This idea alone is large enough to wipe out all minor differences and to create a new interest in every community in the place of the group interests that destroy.

Another thought which needs emphasis to-day is the sanctity of the home. There are forces at work which tend to undermine the home. And when the home is undermined, the very pillars of the state are threatened. This idea, too, is large enough to be preached in every community, and to overshadow any group interests that may threaten the welfare of the community, and it will tend to unite the various conflicting interests into one harmonious whole.

Finally, there is need to-day to draw our communities together through the emphasis which can be laid and must be laid upon national righteousness. It is righteousness that exalts a nation. There can be no righteousness in a nation except as it is found in the individual. The preaching of righteousness and justice in relation to social conditions would do much to

give men a larger idea of society, and it would help to break down the special group interests.

The responsibility of the church to the community is this: she must give the community a vision which transcends the narrow group interests that are usually found in a community. This must be done along the line which divides communities into groups. The gospel of Jesus Christ is human enough in its manward aspects to meet every social condition that may exist. In its Godward aspects it is divine enough to furnish the motive which will lift men out of their surroundings and place them on a higher plane.

THE NEW COUNTRY CHURCH

Ward Platt

The country village church of boyhood days! We stand again near the old farmhouse. It is a sunny summer Sunday morning. The very air seems charged with healing peace. It is vibrant with a single note, the wave-like melody of the old church bell whose call over the intervening miles seems to our childish fancy—"come—come."

A ride in the family wagon, or, better still, astride a farm horse, and we came to the church. A platform was stretched across the entire front. It was filled with men and boys visiting and noting the arrivals.

One felt when he drove in at the church gate that he was passing a weekly inspection. It was an occasion. When the last bell had "tolled," and choir and preacher and people were in their places, the preacher read the first hymn as if a momentous message was in waiting. Scattered among the company were commanding figures who even yet are our embodiment of various Christian graces.

We date mostly from that company. They were our sponsors and our tribunal if we wandered. A fine new church has succeeded the old. The glory of the latter house totally eclipses the former, yet to us there is but one church preeminent—the old box structure of our boyhood.

This is the experience of thousands, and if the present country church rises to its mission it will be the experience of millions. To make to-day's rural church to a countryside anything like what the hamlet church has been to us would be a godsend to our American life.

The great body of our Protestantism is rural. A decided minority of us are in great cities. A new country church that will fit these new times as well as the old did past times—a church that will give the equivalent of our former chance to the young in this their year 1915—is a fundamental requisite of the kingdom of God. But literally to restore for them the church of our youth would prove a perversion. Our church fitted our youth. It would misfit theirs.

This means, then, that a reconstructed rural church in too many cases is an inferior copy of the old with

almost no adaptation to the present generation. It is much deserted. A museum is seldom crowded.

What changes have so antiquated the old rural church? Generally speaking those which might be expected in a virile, progressive nation, but especially the new agriculture and its concomitants,—better roads, rural mail routes, and modern country schools. Rural intelligence, as ever, ballasts the nation. One institution has lagged in the march—the country church. It is not in the front of the procession as formerly. It will, however, more than regain its former preeminence. The new country life movement, spreading over the nation, not only means a reconstructed rural life but one which will demand the highest type of Christian ministry.

The ministry itself will be the chief pioneer of this new church life. It will adjust itself to modern, progressive community life. The agricultural college and state educational leaders are master builders in this new order, but when the arch of the social structure is to receive its keystone they look for one man to place it—the modern country preacher.

No question in Christian circles is more insistent than "What of the country church?" Just now it overshadows discussion concerning city conditions. The case diagnosed shows the utter dependence of the city on the country. So helpless is the city in its relationships to the country that a possible separation would bankrupt the city,—materially, intellectually, and morally, and this in short order. This makes clear the debt of the city to the country. The city has ex-

ploited it. Its monstrous maw has with reckless prodigality swallowed and wasted the resources of the open country until now the city is in danger because of these depleted sources of its life. Not only has the city directly preyed upon the country; it has urbanized it. That is, it has replaced the ideals of the country with those of the city. The people of the country measure rural life in terms of the city. In dress, social life, recreation, home life, the country counts progress as an approximation to city standards.

All this must be changed or our national foundations will be undermined. We must have a country life in every way satisfying, happy, and remunerative or our Republic cannot endure.

What We Mean by "Rural"

By "rural" we mean any community of whatever size whose outlook is dominantly agricultural. This might include some towns of five thousand or more, while suburban villages of one thousand or more could be classed as urban. The United States census draws the line between city and country at twenty-five hundred, but this, while convenient, cannot replace the really very irregular boundary. This applies equally to churches. Some in towns of more than twenty-five hundred are largely dependent on a rural constituency, while in much smaller places the membership is mostly city suburbanites.

However the country may be depleted in population in spots, and especially in people who may help most to build up a community, yet throughout the whole

rural area there is no lack of people. In 1880, in communities of twenty-five hundred or less, we had thirty-five and one third millions, and in 1910 nearly fifty millions. The increase in the decade ending in 1910 was 11.2 per cent. The farm directly supports almost half our citizens, and nearly half our children are born and brought up there.

The depletion of the country by removals to the city has probably about ceased. That is, city growth is now largely due to immigration and the birth-rate.[1]

Country Life Possibilities

The country is not to set itself over against the city; both are interdependent. It is, however, to have a self-respecting life of its own which with all men will rank with that of the city. This will reduce the question of residence, urban or rural, to one of personal choice.

Granting all this, it will at once be seen that the difference between urban and rural life is not one of people, but of organization. In fact, people of the country rank in possibilities above city dwellers. But this matter of the organization of rural life is a field so wide and difficult as to challenge the highest gifts of our best people everywhere. It means a new agriculture, a new rural school, and a new rural church. These three are inseparable. Decadent agriculture means inferior schools and churches. An inferior school means the moving out of progressive families.

[1] For these and other facts see Fiske, *The Challenge of the Country,* chapters I, II.

An inferior church means low morals and a lack of adequate life motives. These three at low ebb mean economic, mental, and moral desolation. The nation and states are becoming fully alive to the necessary conservation of rural life.

An Awakened Government

Liberal national land grants and annual appropriations to state agricultural colleges are bringing these institutions to a level of efficiency shared by few agencies anywhere. Recent large appropriations show a quickened sense of emergency extension work. The state now carries the agricultural college to the farming community and stays for a week. It goes out to individual farms. It will there seek out the last decrepit fruit tree and prescribe a cure. We now have the county agricultural superintendent. He is land doctor and physician at large for the farmers' material ills. One county adds to its superintendency a trained woman to lead in household economics. The state, through its persistent propaganda of soil salvation, sets a pace for the church in soul salvation.

Good-by to the Little Red Schoolhouse

The present old-style country school will ere long be on the scrap-heap. It educates indifferently or in terms of the town. The new curriculum is not less broad, but it walks and talks in the open fields. It takes account of stars and old civilizations and moss-grown languages, but it also helps us to know every-

day growing things and what concerns folks now and what the animals and birds are saying.

The modern rural school introduces the child to nature, and gets him on such intimate terms with her that she imparts to him the wonder-secrets of world life, and opens his eyes and ears to a thousand sights and sounds which will so transfigure the open country that for him to be away from it is to live in exile. The consolidated country school is coming as swift and sure as springtime. For one to connect up with the currents which make for the new agriculture and the new country school is to be jerked out of a groove and set going in an orbit. Such a risk is marked "dangerous" for those who so revere the old ways that they are happier to die on the junk-heap. This, however, is the last generation that will speak in polite terms of that choice.

As prophets of this new century we do well to measure the enormous governmental push behind the farm and rural school, that we may estimate the push necessary to save the country church from stranding,—from being in the next ten years the most belated institution of the countryside. It will not be that, for God's people will put it at the front. This will be done by noble exploits and as heroic leadership as ever marked the heavenly argonauts in pioneering days.

The Church the Crown of Country Life

Leaders in agriculture and education view with sympathetic solicitude the future of the country church, for they know that better farms and better schools

cannot alone furnish the crowning motive and ideal of life. Only the church of God can do that; and to fill this splendid office she must be there, in program, equipment, leadership, and strength, holding her place in the van.

How shall this be done when she cannot command the vast resources of the state which stand back of her handmaids,—agriculture and the school? It shall be done, first of all, by the country preacher. He will see in his task the biggest God-commissioned enterprise of this generation. With slender means he may hew his way as did the prophets and all great souls of the centuries. The fact that he does this is his credential. A man who in poverty thinks he cannot thus achieve has likewise his credential in his failure. He is not one of the elect. Foreordination is full half human grit. And how will he achieve? First, by informing himself. The literature is knee-deep. There is a long list of books. Not that he needs at first to read them all. If he is a beginner, on application, his home missionary office will name for him a half dozen inexpensive books which, together, will open up the new agriculture and rural school as related to the new rural church. But in this work we counsel the broadest cooperation. If the grange or the consolidated school be effectively operating, let him find wherein his church may fail to be abreast of the new countryside creation. Above all let the preachers of a countryside form a *study unit,* dividing the threefold subject in such a way that each pastor is to head up a particular department and lead in it. The coun-

tryside is one, and when more than one homogeneous church is there, they must cooperate in all that makes for essential unity or prove obstructors of the King's highway.

These pastors, by communicating with their state agricultural college and state educational headquarters, will find how alert and ready are these agencies to cooperate with them in the introduction of better agriculture and better schools. This mining and sapping must of course be done without advertising. To preach directly on these themes might defeat a good purpose. Yet, after all study and planning, the pastors of a community must make their own program and work it themselves. The leadership and helpers should be indigenous.

To assume that the country pastor can be less able in the pulpit and less fertile in resources than the city pastor is to confess ignorance on the whole subject. No audiences better know preaching when they hear it or respond more readily to sane leadership than those whose houses of worship adjoin open fields. For years to come our leadership, religious and national, will come from the country. We must see to it that this source of life to our nation, which in turn leads the world, is kept at its best. Home mission boards can do no better than to back picked men for rural churches, financially and inspirationally, until their work is self-supporting, as thus it may be.

We not only go back to the farm for the necessities of life, but from the beginning there has been a sanctity in soil. Man was started an agriculturist. The

Old Testament is a farmer's book. Amos was a man of cattle. The divine Christ, while he beheld the city, was a man of the country, and in his sermons are landscape pictures of rolling fields and trees and living water. There goes the farmer with swinging tread, broadcasting seed, and the birds follow in flocks. Growing things are there, mustard plants, briers, grass, and wild flowers. Yonder hillside is flecked with sheep, while near at hand is a farmyard where a clucking hen covers her chickens. All is framed in the morning and the evening sky from which the preacher reads the signs of fair or stormy weather. It is all there, and more, and when we may restore to the preacher of city or country the Master's rural note and outdoor imagery—we shall help a weary world to be young again, and life will be springtime.

THE ALLIES OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH

(*Report of Committee*)

ALBERT E. ROBERTS, *Chairman,* JOHN ALEXANDER, KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD, THOMAS N. CARVER, JESSIE FIELD, A. A. HEALD, A. A. HYDE, EDWARD VAN ALSTYNE, D. C. DREW.

The allies of the country church are many, and may be divided as follows:

I.—*Those organizations that are an integral part of church organizations, such as*

1. The Sunday-school.
2. The Young People's Societies, Junior and Senior.
3. The Men's Brotherhood.
4. The Missionary Societies, Home and Foreign.
5. Girls' Friendly Society.
6. Ladies' Aid Societies, etc.

II.—*The national and state organizations which institute, supervise, and reenforce these organizations, such as*

1. The International Sunday-school Association and the State Sunday-school Association.
2. The United Society of Christian Endeavor and kindred societies; State and County Young People's Unions and Guilds, etc.
3. National and State denominational brotherhood movements, including Brotherhood of St. Andrew.
4. National Women's and Men's Home and Foreign Missionary Boards.
5. Denominational Social Service bodies; Federation of Churches, etc.
6. American Sunday-school Union, etc.

III.—*Those organizations, not an integral part of the local church, but which are Christian in objective and which are by their own rules controlled by church people, such as*

1. Women's Christian Temperance Union, local, state, county, territorial, and national.
2. Young Men's Christian Association, local, county, state, and national.

3. Young Women's Christian Association, county, territorial, and national.
4. State Bible Societies.
5. Missionary Education Movement.
6. Laymen's Missionary Movement.

IV.—*Those organizations which have the community service ideal but which are not distinctively under church auspices, such as*

1. The Grange, local, state, and national.
2. Village Improvement Society.
3. The Board of Trade, or business organizations.
4. Libraries.
5. Schools.
6. County Farm Bureaus.
7. State Agricultural Colleges, extension service.
8. Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, county and state.
9. Playground Associations.
10. State Boards of Health.
11. Medical Society.
12. Free Public Library Commissions.
13. Civic Leagues.
14. Civic Federations.
15. Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls.
16. County Agricultural Associations.

The functions of I. and II. are generally thoroughly understood; but there is without doubt a need for a clearer definition of relationship, program, and plan of cooperation of those agencies included in III. and

IV. Your Committee recommends that there be compiled methods of community service which the allies of the country church have developed and found practical. It may lead up into an attractive printed booklet prepared by this Committee under the auspices of the Federal Council, which will give definite help and information in these directions. There are some publications already available which the Young Men's Christian Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, and other organizations working in cooperation with the church have used with success in work with boys and young men and girls and young women which would be helpful to country pastors, as well as to all others who are interested in work in country churches.

Every organization which can be considered as an ally of the country church has a certain definite field of its own in which it is more or less of a specialist serving all the churches. There are many plans which have been inaugurated with success by the various agencies, such as those mentioned above,—the Missionary Education Movement, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and others. For instance, there should be included in some way and be made available to church leaders material on the relationship of the church in the country to the boys and young men and the girls and young women in the community; the kind of opportunities for service which they should have in the church; the kind of Bible study that would appeal to them; and the kind of recreation they should be of-

fered; and how to develop leaders for all of these activities.

In the report on "The Function, Policy, and Program of the Country Church" it is stated that "the church should regard itself as the servant of the entire community, and should be deeply concerned with all legitimate agencies in the community. . . . It should suggest and inspire rather than instigate and supervise, but it may undertake any new service for which there is not other provision." [1]

This report also suggests that the Rural Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association, the Young People's Societies, the Missionary Education Movement, and similar organized allies of the country church, should be utilized, encouraged, and supported in their work by the country church. This includes, of course, financial as well as moral support, and sometimes the use of church buildings for these allies of the country church.

Granted that this is a true conception of the church's relationship to its allies, the twofold question arises: first, as to how the church can help the allies; second, as to how the allies can help the church.

Lest there be any misunderstanding in regard to our position, let us say frankly that we believe the church to be the vitalizing and fundamental agency for rural redirection. From it should emanate the inspiration and enthusiasm, not only to suggest and sometimes initiate all good work, but to support it. Notwithstanding the weaknesses and errors with which the

[1] See page 120.

country church is charged by many church leaders as well as critics from outside, it is still the one organization that persists in most communities, and it has, or should have, the attitude of helpfulness toward every agency for good. Its position should be, not what can we get from the allies that will help us, but how can we utilize and energize these allies to their highest efficiency and for the extension of the kingdom of God.

It should, therefore, encourage its men, if they have special fitness for leadership of boys and young men, to support and work with the Young Men's Christian Association, the county Farm Bureau, the Agricultural College, and other men's organizations. In the same way it should encourage the women members of the church, if they have capacity, to promote very earnestly such community enterprises as the Young Women's Christian Association, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Grange, arts and crafts guilds, playgrounds, etc.

These specialized agencies, if properly used, encouraged, and supported will yield large dividends in the vitality of the church life.

On the other hand, these agencies may be of tremendous *direct* help in the promotion of church activities. The handbook, already referred to, may be used by an energetic and progressive pastor, Sunday-school superintendent, or leader of young people to splendid advantage, but the largest service that can be rendered to the church by its allies is the service of *suggestion or demonstration.*

What the country community needs at the present time more than anything else is a demonstration of some of the fine theories that have been advanced in the past few years.

It is generally conceded that the solidarity of the community is to be greatly desired in the country. The community approach to the problem of rural redirection can often best be made by an interdenominational agency. A demonstration of community-wide play festivals, civic improvements, picnics, surveys, socials, etc., is the finest incentive toward unity of effort in things distinctly spiritual.

The activities promoted by the allies of the country church are in themselves worth while, but the service of suggestion which they render is of far greater significance. Not the least important in this service of suggestion is a demonstration of the possibility of community cooperation or getting together. Many local church leaders, because of repeated failure of church cooperation, have come to believe that community cooperation is impossible.

A practical demonstration of community cooperation, in a town clean-up, led to the uniting of two rural churches, the improving of the parsonage, the construction of a parish house, and the securing of an efficient pastor who was a real community leader as well as pastor of a church which attracted and held the interest and cooperation of practically all the boys and men of the community.

A boys' group under the auspices of an ally in another town brought together two churches that for

over forty years had been a strong divisive factor in community life.

In another community an ally promoted a survey in which men who had been religiously antagonistic for years were brought together, resulting in the awakening of a *local initiative* to get together on the part of church leaders hitherto regarded as impossible in matters pertaining to church union or federation.

The promotion of interdenominational conferences for older boys and girls, where world-wide vision of the Kingdom are presented by broad-minded men and women and where the basis of appeal is Christian service, is doing much to produce a type of men and women in the next generation who, with no less a religious motive, will stand for a more timely and practical application of Christianity to the problems of the country church than their fathers could possibly have done. It is obvious that no one church could efficiently promote and direct such conferences, but allies of the church are serving all the churches most effectively in this way.

Authorities on country life everywhere agree that its greatest need is leadership. This is conspicuously true of the country church; and with this thing in mind one of the allies of the country church has brought out a text-book, *The Challenge of the Country,* written by Professor Fiske of Oberlin. In this book the opportunities for service in the country and the challenge for the best of leadership are set forth in a most attractive study. Six thousand of these books were in use in classes promoted by the Young Men's

Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association in the colleges and the universities last year, and, furthermore, at the Student Conferences which are attended by representative student leaders from all the colleges and universities, normal classes were conducted in the study of this book by some of the best rural life leaders of the country. The object aimed at was to send back to the colleges young men and young women qualified to teach this course.

It is not strange that at the close of these conferences many country young men and young women have said that they have never looked upon the country before as a field of service for a life-work. The writer knows at least seven young men who are preparing themselves for the rural ministry as a result of one such course covering a period of ten days in the summer of 1915. They are entering the rural ministry with the same enthusiasm that has characterized the thousands of the very flower of our American colleges and universities who have enlisted for service in the foreign field in the last ten or fifteen years.

The allies of the country church have served and will serve many denominations in this way much more effectively than they could be served otherwise.

One of the problems of pastors and religious leaders is to connect up with the city churches the large number of boys and young men who are leaving the country for the city. An effectual system known as the Corresponding Membership System has been developed by one of the allies of the country church, whereby prominent laymen act as corresponding members in the

rural communities and on blanks specially prepared inform the state offices when young men are leaving their homes to begin life in the city or the college. Immediately on receiving this information the state office gets it into the hands of the representative in the place in which the young man is going, and at once he is looked up and made acquainted with helpful friends, and if possible representatives of his own denomination. The same thing is done by another ally of the country church for the young women.

No one denomination could do this work effectually, but the allies of the country church serve all denominations. There are many accounts of young men and young women helped at the very time they needed help most—just at the beginning of their life in the city or the large town—that read like romances. Through training institutes and summer schools and conferences conducted under the auspices of the allies a tremendous service is being rendered the country church, for in these gatherings thousands of young men and women are seeing the vision of the possibility of service and many who have been of little value as leaders are becoming tremendous assets.

One of the greatest needs of the country church is to protect the efficient young pastors who, having given their lives to service in the country, are constantly beset with appeals to leave their charges and go to the city. It is difficult to make many church leaders see that one of the greatest handicaps of the church in the past has been that it has been used as a stepping-stone or training-school for the city. Only recently an unusu-

ally effective young pastor appealed to us to cooperate with him in protecting himself from the good-will of his friends. I know of no finer service that the allies can render the country church than to encourage young men not only to enter the rural pastorate but to remain in it until the community is brought to a high state of efficiency.

The allies recognize the fact that life has been taken out of the country; and nothing will bring the church, the home, and the school to its own like the reinvestment of life. There are thousands of ways in which the allies can and do help the country church. There are places naturally where at times what is intended for supplementing looks like supplanting and cooperation is mistaken for competition, but most of the allies with which we are familiar recognize the church as the fundamental agency, and as such desire to give it the very best help and cooperation.

What the Master said with reference to the life of the individual holds true regarding the country church. That church which loses its life in hearty cooperation with these legitimate allies will find its larger life in increased influence and power in the community; and it is equally true that the allies which desire to be of the largest possible use in rural redirection can never attain their greatest efficiency without the recognition of the church as the final source of inspiration in all true Christian leadership.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND THE COUNTRY GIRL

Jessie Field

In these days we are coming to know that the chance for an abundant life for women and girls in the country is at the very foundation of the possibility of making the country the best place in which to live. A country girl, when asked if she liked the country, replied: "Yes, the country is a fine place to live—when the work is done."

Many a farmer rents his farm and moves to town on account of his wife and daughters. Surely there is no point in raising more corn or better stock and getting more money from farming unless that money be used for better houses and churches and schools,—for more *life* in the country community.

So the country church faces the big opportunity of service to country girls,—the chance to bring to them the chance for expression of their whole lives.

To do this the church must create the motive spirit-power of leadership in teachers of schools and of Sunday-schools and must work sympathetically with every movement for scientific home making, for lightening the work in farmhouses, and for the bringing in of music and literature, and the right kind of recreation and social life. The country church should use to the utmost in its community the County Young Women's Christian Association, calling on the county secretary as a leader of girls, who is trained for the

work, who understands girls, who is in touch with present-day resources for girls, and who can help in making Jesus Christ real in their every-day lives.

Certain it is that the country church that opens the door for the biggest and best chances to its girls will find added life for the present and for future years. It will inspire the country girl to enter into the breadth and sweep of this progressive ideal:

I am glad I live in the country. I love its beauty and its spirit. I rejoice in the things I can do as a country girl for my home and my neighborhood.

I believe I can share in the beauty around me; in the fragrance of the orchards in spring, in the weight of the ripe wheat at harvest, in the morning songs of birds, and in the glow of the sunset on the far horizon. I want to express this beauty in my own life as naturally and happily as the wild rose blooms by the roadside.

I believe I can have a part in the courageous spirit of the country. This spirit has entered into the brook in our pasture. The stones placed in its way call forth its strength and add to its strength a song. It dwells in the tender plants as they burst the seed-cases that imprison them and push through the dark earth to the light. It sounds in the nestling notes of the meadow-lark. With this courageous spirit I, too, can face the hard things of life with gladness.

I believe there is much I can do in my country home. Through studying the best way to do my every-day work I can find joy in common tasks done well. Through loving comradeship I can help bring into my

home the happiness and peace that are always so near us in God's out-of-door world. Through such a home I can help make real to all who pass that way their highest ideal of country life.

I believe my love and loyalty for my country home should reach out in service to that larger home that we call our neighborhood. I would join with the people who live there in true friendliness. I would wholeheartedly give my best to further all that is being done for a better community. I would have all that I think and say and do help to unite country people near and far in that great Kingdom of Love for Neighbors which the Master came to establish—the Master who knew and cared for country ways and country folks.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH AND RURAL ACTIVITIES

W. O. Thompson

The topic assigned to me was with the understanding that I should present to you some conditions arising out of the activities of the federal and state governments in rural life. Briefly, let me survey the three great activities of the federal government.

First, the passage of the Act of 1862, commonly known as the Morrill Act, or the Land Grant Act, which provided for the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college in each state in the Union, where the real object should be, without

excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agricultural and mechanic arts in such manner as the legislatures of the states may respectfully prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life. The donation of public lands to these institutions was to provide a permanent endowment which would remain unimpaired. As a result of this act there is now at least one College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in each state in the Union.

This act was supplemented in 1890 by what is known as the second Morrill Act, which provided an additional income of $25,000 annually to each state. The act was further amended by the so-called Nelson Amendment of 1908, which increased the sum provided in the act of 1890 to a maximum of $50,000 per annum. Thus there is given to each state for its agricultural college the original endowment of public lands and $50,000 annually. In response to this endowment by the government the states have provided the buildings and in many instances several times the revenue as provided by the federal government. The result is that the colleges of agriculture throughout the country are among the best endowed and most amply equipped institutions in the country.

Second, the Hatch Act of 1887, which provided for the establishment of Agricultural Experiment Stations in each state in the Union. This act provided an annual appropriation of $15,000. An amendatory

act in 1906, known as the Adams Act, doubled this appropriation, making the present maximum of $30,000 annually.

These institutions have been engaged in scientific research upon the problems underlying agricultural progress. They have published a large number of important scientific documents that constitute the basis of a great agricultural library for all agricultural institutions.

Third, the Smith-Lever Agricultural Extension Act, which was approved May 8, 1914. This provided for an initial appropriation of $10,000 to each state in the Union, and for an additional sum of $600,000 for the second year, and thereafter an increase of $500,000 annually until it should be a maximum of $4,100,000 in addition to the original appropriation of $480,000.

The purpose of this act was to bring, through co-operative methods between the federal government and the several agricultural colleges, the results of scientific agricultural research to the home of the individual farmer. The method of instruction is through extension schools,—field demonstrations to persons not resident in or attending agricultural colleges. For one hundred years we have been sending our children to school. It is now proposed to send the best results of the school back to the home by way of practical demonstration in the great fields of agriculture and home economics. It should be added that in order to secure the increased appropriations provided in the extension act each state must meet the appro-

priation of the federal government by an equal appropriation for such purposes. This will result in a minimum of nearly $10,000,000 annually expended in this demonstration work which will be carried into every nook and corner of the rural districts of the United States of America. No more far-reaching act has been passed in a generation.

To cite a few instances by way of illustration, I may say that the state of Ohio under this act reaches its maximum within five years from the present date. There will be available for extension work about $350,000 annually. In a neighboring state like Indiana it will be not far from $275,000; in Illinois, not far from $375,000; in a state like Alabama, not far from $300,000. The distribution of this money is upon a percentage basis, based upon the ratio of the rural population of a given state to the total rural population of the entire country.

Aside from these three great activities it must be remembered that the Department of Agriculture at Washington receives annually not far from $20,000,000, and that its activities are organized in the interests of the agriculture of the country, including research and the special consideration of regional and nation-wide problems.

What now of the significance of these things? To this conference let me say, first of all, that the administration of these funds in all the departments suggested above has an immediate bearing upon the problems of rural life. Our colleges of agriculture, our stations, and the Department at Washington recog-

nize the social phase of rural life, the economic phase and educational phase, and in fact every interest that bears upon the large problem of rural maintenance and improvement.

The Roosevelt Country Life Committee made an elaborate study of rural life conditions. Every college and station in the country to-day is in sympathy with the spirit of progress in that commission's report and will move forward in every field offering support for agricultural betterment. We must not, therefore, conceive of these institutions as teaching or scientific institutions devoted exclusively to soil fertility, plant production, or animal husbandry. They are, as a matter of fact, educational and scientific institutions having within their scope economic, social, and educational problems. These activities will continue and will arouse a large amount of rural organization. The men and women engaged in agricultural extension in any and all of its forms, including farmers' institutes and county agent work, will be among the best representatives of American agriculture and thoroughly devoted to the social and moral betterment of our community life.

Associating as I do with educational organizations of various kinds, I do not hesitate to say in this presence that I find no body of educators anywhere possessed of a more profound moral earnestness nor more thoroughly devoted to the moral and spiritual welfare of the people than the group of men represented in the Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations.

These facts seem to me to constitute the greatest opportunity of the generation for the church to co-operate with existing agencies in the accomplishment of spiritual, social, and moral results. In fact, we may say that this situation is a substantial challenge to the church. To lay hold of an opportunity presented without expense to the church would seem to be an imperative duty.

In presenting this urgent plea for the opportunity before us, let me impress upon you that no fear need be entertained about any controversy with the state or government in these great issues. Our cooperation will be most cordially welcomed. The people engaged in these enterprises are already, to a very large degree, the people now interested in our rural schools and rural churches. The one thing we need to guard against is the development of any tendency for a narrow or sectarian use of this opportunity. The state, in my humble opinion, is profoundly interested in religion and the peaceable fruits of religion. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." The state, however, is not interested in the perpetuation of particular forms of religion. It owns no antagonism to any church or creed, but the state, separate from the church in this country, may not be brought into the controversial sides of religion or church. Let us therefore regard this great opportunity as one freighted with splendid possibilities, provided we may lay aside the differences, however important they may be, and put our emphasis upon the things upon which we agree. For

after all these must be the fundamental and vitally important things.

No such nation-wide extension movement in the interest of agriculture has ever been projected as is now in operation in the United States under the three great acts, as suggested above. In my opinion no such great opportunity has ever been given the church to organize properly the spiritual forces of the rural community in the interest of the Kingdom. Let us hope and pray that this conference and subsequent conferences may open the way to a large utilization of this opportunity and to the speeding of the things that pertain to life and godliness.

MEMOIRS OF A RURAL CHURCH

Hubert C. Herring

I shall bring to you certain memories of a country church in the Central West some forty years ago, with their suggestions for the rural religious problems of to-day. It was a church belonging to the best type of its time. Round about were fertile farms tilled by pioneer stock from New England and New York. The church building stood on a hill in the place of honor. On another hill near by was the district schoolhouse. The traditional interest in education was strong. Large numbers of the boys and girls were sent away to academy and college. There was

a keen interest in the problems of the larger world. Among the things of which these memories speak are these:

1. The influence of this church was potent. It was not a large affair. A congregation of sixty was the maximum. It did not run at high pressure. It continued to draw home mission funds after it should have been self-supporting. The thrifty farmers who supported it were never zealous to pay more than they were obliged to. The casual observer would have said it was only an incident in the life of the community. But to a considerable group of men and women now in middle life scattered here and there over the earth no proof of its power is required. They know that all life holds for them here or hereafter has its roots back in that little church.

2. These memories confirm strongly the constant assertion of students of rural life that the country church suffers from lack of the cooperative spirit. It was never easy to get the community to work together. There were many feuds and factions. The sectarian spirit caused some families to attend church outside the parish. Individualism ran to seed. I cannot recall that ministers or church officers showed any clear perception of the duty of the church to act as a unifying force.

3. This church illustrated also the evils of a non-resident ministry. At its organization the pastor lived in the country, cultivated a small piece of land, and drove on Sundays to the village for a second service. But the next pastor and all who came after

preferred to live within sound of the locomotive, and even if they had not so chosen, the village church would doubtless have insisted upon it. The inevitable consequences followed. The minister who came to preach on Sunday was in effect a stranger. Especially was he almost entirely outside the life of the young. He could have little share in the neighborhood life. Nor, if the truth must be told, was he as a rule the sort of man who could have taken decided leadership even if living in the community, being too academic and not human enough.

4. In like way the experience of this country parish corroborates all that is said about the church as a community center. There was not much definite purpose to make it such. But, because there was no other place to meet, the debating club met in the church building, the singing school was held there, the social gatherings were largely there. Even the Sunday services had a community quality as affording the only time when people had opportunity to talk over crops, taxes, school interests, and politics. Even these small community services were a great blessing both to the people around and reciprocally to the church.

But it is easy to see, looking back upon the situation, what boundless possibilities in this line lay within easy reach of that church. Under competent, broad-visioned leadership, with the ample materials available, it could have shaped the entire community life. Particularly in the educational field it touched only the fringe of its possibilities. In sex hygiene,

in ideals of life-work, in acquaintance with great characters, in civic patriotism, and in manners as well as in personal morals and personal religion, it could have shaped lives intrusted to it.

5. Last of all, this church has illustrated in the most complete and painful way what happens to the rural church or any other church which does not build its life on a broad democratic basis. When the young people began to go to the cities and the old people to retire to the villages for their last years, the farms were taken by families of various races and faiths. Before long the old supporters were all gone. It would have been a task sufficiently hard to keep the church going even if its history had been of the wisest. But, lacking hold upon the community at large, never having taught all the people to count it their church, it dwindled rapidly, and years ago its doors were closed. Of late some signs of hope have appeared. Services are held more or less regularly. But it is the mere ghost of its former self. Whether it can ever become what once it was so near being future years must tell.

THE LARGER BENZONIA PARISH

Harlow S. Mills

I suppose I am asked to speak to-night because I represent a vigorous country church in the as yet but

partially developed region of northern Michigan. We call it "The Larger Benzonia Parish" because of its more recently extended territory. It is a kind of an "experiment station" where we are working out and demonstrating a method of country evangelization and rural betterment which promises to be successful, and which we hope may be profitably applied in many parts of the land.

The conditions of the Benzonia field were specially favorable for such an experiment. The community was settled by a high-minded and earnest-hearted company of people from northern Ohio more than half a century ago. The Pilgrims did not bring to the New England coast a truer motive or a purer purpose than they. It was their object to plant in the northern Michigan wilderness Christian institutions. They were willing to put into the enterprise their lives and their fortunes. They stamped the community which they founded with the impress of their ideals, and that stamp has persisted. Like Abraham, their first work after entering the promised land was to build an altar to Jehovah, and like him and their New England ancestors, they built it on the highest elevation they could find. One of the first things they did was to select a site for a church and school, and, standing under the tall beeches and maples, with hymn and prayer, to dedicate that high hilltop to the cause of Christian education. The church that they planted was the first in all the Grand Traverse region. It has now a membership of about three hundred in a village of seven hundred, and is the center of the religious

and social life, not only of the village and the immediate community, but also of the territory known as "The Larger Parish"—twelve miles long and ten miles wide. It has been the mother of churches, and now stands encircled by a number of younger organizations which are growing strong and sturdy under her cherishing influence.

For more than fifty years this church has had the central place in that community. The village life has clustered about it, and from it have gone forth those influences that have been most potent in molding the character of the people, and in giving them their ideals. A fine body of Christian men and women have been trained up, sturdy and strong, with well-grounded principles and large ideas, and to them more than to anything else is due the work which has been done. They are splendid followers, they work well together, and are ready to cooperate in any sane movement to promote the kingdom of God.

For fifteen years I worked away in this, my country parish. They were happy years of glad, harmonious work, and I was satisfied with my work. Though remote from the great centers of population and living in a small village with people of very modest means, I had never been visited by that restless feeling that spoils the peace and mars the work of so many ministers. There was a good understanding between myself and my people.

At the close of this period, however, I was called to pass through deep affliction. My home was broken up with a sudden stroke. Into the dark valley of

sorrow my people accompanied me as far as they were able to go, and the effect was to unite us with bonds that were very strong and tender. Every home in all the parish was mine. All the children belonged to me. There was a chair for me at every fireside, and a plate at every table.

But as the years went by there came some tempting opportunities to engage in work elsewhere. I was not without my ambitions and aspirations. I wanted to fill out the full measure of my ability and do my best work; and when some opportunities came that made the little country parish seem by comparison rather small and meager, I was not proof against them. I spent some weeks in considering the propositions from the city and the state, and finally refused them. I could not bring myself to sever my connection with those to whom I had been so long and closely related. The personal tie was too strong, and I decided to remain with my people.

With the decision came a thorough heart-searching. It marked a turning-point in my spiritual history. I was impressed with the thought that, if it was God's will that I should remain in my present work, it must be for a special purpose. Things could not be in the future as they had been in the past. If it was the Lord's will that I should remain in that country parish, there must be some work there which it was worth while for me to do; some work that in some degree, at least, would approach in importance the large opportunities offered by the city and the state. Was there anything to be done among those hills and

in those rapidly disappearing forests that could fire a man's ambitions and satisfy his high aspirations?

Just here the vision came. At first a whole township was revealed as a possible parish. Then the vision expanded until it took in another township and parts of three or four more. It became plain that almost half a county was tributary to the church, that five hundred families and twenty-five hundred people were waiting for its ministry. It dawned upon my mental vision that I was called upon to be the pastor of all these people, and that the Benzonia Church was responsible for them all; that they had a right to look to us for service and help, and that if we failed to give it we should be unfaithful to our Master and recreant to our trust. Then I said, "Here is something worth doing. Here may be wrought out an experiment in country evangelization and rural betterment that may help to arrest the downward trend that has become so alarming in these days. It was for this that God kept me here. If I can make this vision a reality, I need not pine for a larger field. If I can help others to see the vision, and inspire them with enthusiasm to make it real in larger fields than mine, I shall never be sorry that I stayed by the stuff."

The church had for many years been much interested in both home and foreign missions. In fact those who were well acquainted with the churches of the state have often said that in proportion to its resources, its gifts were larger than those of any other church. Not only did its members give money, but they gave their own sons and daughters to carry the

gospel to less favored regions. Many of the young women of the church had gone to teach in home mission schools, and there came a day when my favorite niece, brought up in my home as an active and useful member of the church, beloved by all, was consecrated with solemn services in the little church on the hilltop to the foreign work, and was sent forth with the prayers and blessings of all the people to represent them among the awakening millions of China.

As I was sitting in my study one day, pondering upon these things, the absurdity of the situation came over me all at once. "Here we are, gathering money to send our sons and daughters to the distant parts of the earth, but we are doing absolutely nothing for scores of families almost within sound of our church bell. We are anxious to give the gospel to the millions of other lands whom we have never seen, and never shall see; but we have not felt very much responsibility for those who are separated from us by only a few miles. There are many families and hundreds of people within five or six miles of our church that are practically without the gospel as truly as are the Chinese or the South Sea islanders. We have made no systematic effort to interest them in these things." Then I heard the Master say: "These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone." And then came the vision of the Larger Parish. I saw the church reaching out and touching tenderly, but effectively, all the people in the surrounding country. I saw every family in that wide

region tributary to the church. I saw the church laying systematic plans to carry the gospel to all these outlying neighborhoods. I began to think of all those people as my parishioners as truly as were those who lived near the church and who were members of it. In my own mind I annexed all the surrounding country and began to make plans for the evangelization and helping of all the people who dwelt therein. So under the stimulus of foreign missions the vision came of the work that could be done and should be done nearer home.

The next thing was to bring the vision to the earth and to make it a reality. How was it to be done?

The first thing was to make a survey of the field. I started out to visit all the families in this wide territory. I tramped over the whole parish. I lived with the people and was often absent from my home for two or three days at a time, until there was scarcely a home in all that region where I was a stranger. This was most delightful and satisfying work. There was a welcome everywhere, and, almost without exception the people seemed pleased to come in touch with the representative of the church. Such an opportunity to get up close to the people is worth a score of sermons. This visiting tour occupied many weeks; in fact, a large part of the autumn months I spent in this way. I came to know the people as I had never known them before. My touch with them was warmer and closer. I came to think of them in a different way, and there was established between them and myself a bond of sympathy that did not exist before.

My task with the church in bringing it to get my point of view, to see the vision as I saw it and to cooperate with me in making it a reality, was not difficult. The people were ready for the larger work,—at least they were ready to be made ready.

All they needed was light and leading. This I undertook to give. I told them my vision of the Larger Parish. I held it up before them continually, preaching it on the Sabbath, and talking about it in the prayer-meeting. From week to week I could see the kindling flame of enthusiasm in the congregation. The people began to see the reasonableness of it. They began to feel some responsibility for it, some joy and hope, as the possibility of doing it dawned upon them.

But how should we begin? How should we move out into this Larger Parish, and get hold of this greater work? I began to hold one meeting each week in some distant schoolhouse, taking with me some of my men, for I considered that the success of the work depended, not so much on what I said, as upon the attitude of the church toward it. The presence of the men with me in these services greatly increased the effectiveness of the effort. I was a preacher, and was simply on my job. They represented the church and proclaimed to the people in the outlying regions its attitude toward them.

At first I had no definite thought of how the work would develop. I simply started out to do what I could for the people in that wide territory. The need of a helper began to press heavily upon me. The

matter was brought before the representatives of the state work. The superintendent came and visited the field, and the result was such cooperation with the Home Missionary Society as enabled us to secure an assistant for our work. And as it developed, it was not long till another helper was needed, so that now the work is carried on by three men, each of them responsible for a certain portion of the territory. They work in most delightful harmony, and the fellowship which they have with one another is one of the best things about it.

A fine example of what may be done in the way of denominational comity, when a really Christian spirit prevails, was shown on this field, and it did much to make the work of the Larger Parish possible. Two small Methodist churches within the territory mentioned were exchanged for two Congregational churches of a similar grade in an adjoining county. This was worked through by the representatives of the two denominations, and with the churches themselves without difficulty, leaving a free field for the Congregationalists in one county, and for the Methodists in the other. A commission was appointed consisting of a Methodist and a Congregationalist from a distant town, who appraised the properties belonging to the various churches and reported the basis of exchange. The Methodist man thought the Congregationalists ought to pay $250 to boot. The Congregational man thought the Methodists ought to pay a like sum. So they traded even, and every one was satisfied. If some such exchange could be made in

many country neighborhoods, it would be a most happy arrangement, and one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the kingdom of God would be removed.

Having shown the plan in successful operation, I may speak of some methods used and some things done which show religious progress. This must be the crucial test of any church work. It must bring people into harmony with God and his truth. It must line them up on the side of Jesus Christ, or it cannot be said to be successful, however many other desirable things it may accomplish. Spiritual results cannot be tabulated, but a few things can be mentioned that show progress.

The work has been fairly well organized throughout the whole parish, and is moving on steadily in definite directions.

There are now eleven points where regular Sunday services are held in this territory, which comprises one whole township and parts of five others. These services are held in one church, eight chapels, and two schoolhouses. Other points are asking for service, but with our present force no more work can be undertaken. These preaching points are so arranged that no family with the exception of a few who live in one remote corner of the parish, need go more than a mile and a half to find a place of worship. The aggregate attendance on these services will average not far from six hundred in a population of twenty-five hundred,—about one fourth of the population of the parish being present with some degree of regularity. There are

three small country churches affiliated with the village church at Benzonia in carrying on this work, with a combined membership of about four hundred. Ten Sunday-schools are maintained within the parish with six hundred in attendance. The clerical force is composed of the pastor and his two assistants, and each of them preaches three times on the Sabbath, so that there are nine preaching services. The three pastors usually get together on Monday and talk over the work, spending part of the day in the most delightful fellowship. They make frequent exchanges, taking each other's work for a Sunday and thus giving the people a change, and themselves some variety of experience. In this way they promote acquaintance and fellowship throughout the whole parish. This is a most profitable combination. The older pastor helps the younger men with his wider experience, and the boys put new life and fresh spirit into the heart of the older man.

If the amount of money which people are willing to give for religious purposes is an index of their interest in the Kingdom, one must conclude that there has been a very significant revival in that respect throughout the Larger Parish. More means for carrying on the work are now in sight than one would have supposed it possible to raise five years ago. The total salary of the pastor and his two assistants is two and a half times the pastor's salary alone before the wider work was undertaken. This, however, is made possible only through the help of the Home Missionary Society. The contributions to home

and foreign missions have more than doubled in this period, and the number of contributors has increased twofold. More than twice as much money is raised on the whole field now than was the case before the wider work began, and it comes with just as little effort. Nobody now objects to the work on financial ground. It has paid for itself in every way.

Two or three times a year all the services in the out-stations are omitted, and all the people are invited to come together for a Sabbath service on the seminary campus at Benzonia. These are most enjoyable and profitable occasions. They assemble under the great beech and maple trees, a sermon is preached by some noted minister from abroad, there is a picnic dinner with time for sociability and fellowship, and then in the afternoon another service of a more varied character. These general services are well attended, and they tend to bind the whole parish together with a larger sense of community interest.

Believing that the church should minister to the whole man and have something to say and something to do with his social as well as his spiritual nature, we have paid considerable attention to some things that have often been considered as lying outside of the sphere of religion. Realizing the tendency of country life to isolation and extreme individualism, and the danger of its becoming barren and monotonous, we have thought it important to provide for social and literary functions, and for wholesome recreation and healthful pleasures. It has been our effort to make all our out-stations social centers, and to encourage fre-

quent meetings where the people might mingle in a free and friendly manner. They have responded heartily to these efforts and have appreciated very much the opportunities that have been afforded them in this direction.

Neighborhood clubs have been organized in some of the out-stations whose function it is to provide for these social necessities. The name "Neighborhood Club" quite well defines their object. The work is carried on in three departments under the direction of three committees: (1) the Social Committee, whose business it is to arrange for picnics, parties, excursions, etc.; (2) the Literary Committee, which provides lectures, debates, and the like; and (3) the Team Work Committee, which leads out in any movement of a public or a charitable nature in which the people need to cooperate. The meetings of these clubs are well attended and they are a profitable source of improvement and recreation.

Lecture courses are arranged, usually by home talent, and upon subjects of local and practical interest. The pastor has done a good deal of work with the stereopticon, illustrating the story of a trip to Palestine and a cruise of the Mediterranean. These clubs soon develop talent and resources of various kinds which are quite sufficient, and they require but little help from the outside.

Some attention has been paid to athletics. The young men have been organized into athletic clubs, and they have been headed up in an athletic league. They hold occasional field days, with sports and contests for

the boys and girls. This we find is very profitable when we have some one who has the training and the other qualifications of a suitable director.

One more way of working has also proved valuable and well worth while. Like most small villages, we have a weekly newspaper which finds its way into most of the homes of the parish. The pastor and the editor work together in the effort to make it an organ of helpful power in the community life. For five years I have had a column, usually a column and a half, in this paper each week. It is my regular Monday forenoon work to write "The Pastor's Column." I put into it whatever I think will be useful to the people, bringing them many a message that would hardly come appropriately in the pulpit, and reaching in that way many whom I should not often come in touch with otherwise. The themes are various, but a few will serve as specimens: "How to Keep One's Religion and Make It Pay"; "The Back Yard"; "The Test of the Summer Time"; "The Man You Happen to Meet"; "Plan Your Work, and Work Your Plan," etc. Any local topic of general interest is taken up and discussed, and the activities of the church and the social and literary doings in the various out-stations are kept before the people. I consider this one of my most valuable ways of working, and I find that The Pastor's Column is eagerly looked for and widely read. This suggests the question whether in the past the pastors of our churches have sufficiently appreciated the value of printer's ink as an adjunct in carrying on religious and community

work. If the pastor can speak through the press as well as from the pulpit, he is doubling his influence.

What do we find to be the result of the five years' work of the Larger Parish? They have been the five most prosperous years of the church's history of more than half a century. Two men have been added to the clerical force. The expenses of the church have been met, and the bills have been paid when due. The contributions for home and foreign missions have more than doubled. More members have been received than during any other similar period. There has been perfect harmony, and the people have been glad and happy in their common work. Ten places of worship have been established in the country around where regular services are held. The people in these neighborhoods attend their own services, and do not come to the central church as many of them formerly did. The present arrangement does not tend to build up a large central congregation, but has the opposite effect. Thirty former central members have become part of a newly formed church three miles away. There has been no great increase in the population, either of the village, or of the country around. But the congregation and Sunday-school of the central church were never so large as they have been during this period. It has been found impossible to accommodate all those who wish to worship in the church, or properly to care for those attending the Sunday-school. A larger building became an actual necessity, and in the summer of 1913 an addition was made, increasing the seating capacity more than one third and providing a number

of rooms for Sunday-school and social purposes. The building has been painted, reshingled, and thoroughly renovated; everything about is in good shape, and it has all been paid for. The congregations fill the larger building as well as they did before the addition was made. Can we doubt that the blessing of God will attend any church that sees the vision, and with faith and courage and sacrifice gives itself to the work of making it a reality?

I believe we are beginning to see the dawning of a better day for the rural regions; that the fountains of physical, moral, and religious strength which have seemed to be failing in these latter days are about to be "reopened," and that we may soon expect to see them flowing with new force and volume to refresh the earth. Perhaps there is no movement just at present that is more vitally related to the progress of the kingdom of God in the world. God grant that the fair and blessed vision may dawn upon every heart, that the village churches may see their opportunity, and that the work of rehabilitation may proceed at a rapid pace in the years that are just before us!

THE FUNCTION, POLICY, AND PROGRAM OF THE COUNTRY CHURCH

(Report of Committee)

KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD, *Chairman,* JESSIE FIELD, G. WALTER FISKE, CHARLES O. GILL, ALBERT E. ROBERTS, HENRY WALLACE.

Your Committee began its study on the assumption that there were three aspects of the work of the country church that needed stating:

1. A definition of the *function* of the country church, in order to gain if possible a clear notion of what the fundamental work of the church is, particularly in relation to the work of other social institutions.

2. An outline of a *general policy* for the country church as a whole, in trying to carry out its function.

3. A suggestive *program,* embodying many concrete plans and suggestions for the work of the local church, appropriate to the carrying out of the general policy.

A preliminary statement was prepared by the committee, giving a definition of function, an outline of a country church policy, and a program of detailed work for the local church. This statement was sent to about one hundred and fifty leading men in country life work, including pastors, country church organization officials, and professors in colleges and theological seminaries. Nearly a hundred replies were received. A few presented excuses for failure to answer; others expressed approval without criticism or suggestion. The com-

munications more or less extended that were critical or suggestive numbered nearly seventy. Some of these were very full, and indeed so suggestive and important are they that your committee is fully warranted in saying that it is doubtful if there is any other collection of opinions about the country church so valuable as those contained in these seventy replies. The general attitude in these replies is most appreciative of the purpose sought, while it is critical only of forms of statement.

The committee secured the invaluable service of Dr. Wilbert L. Anderson, author of *The Country Town,* to edit this important material. Dr. Anderson's sudden death last spring deprived us of his final editing, but fortunately, a few days before his death he had completed the first draft of his study of these replies, and had formulated new statements in the light of his study. Your committee has considered this material carefully, and while rearranging Dr. Anderson's edition of the statement, has made little change in the substance.

It is agreed by your committee that some such statement as this should be made after thorough study by the Commission on Church and Country Life of the Federal Council, and promulgated with their approval, together with a plan for revivifying the American country church and of assisting to organize its work on broad but vital lines.

It is recommended by your committee that this statement be carefully studied by the whole Commission, and that it be not published until it has the practically

unanimous approval of the Commission, but that, when published, it be sent if possible to every country church in America, accompanied not only by a letter from this Commission expressing the hope that it may be used as a basis for discussion of plans for a forward movement, but that it may also be accompanied by official communications from authoritative church bodies, urging action and outlining plans for carrying out a definite country church campaign.

The Function of the Country Church

God's great purpose for men is the highest possible development of each personality and of the human race as a whole. It is essential to this growth that men shall hold adequate ideals of character and life. The Christian believes that these ideals must spring from a clear appreciation of God's purpose, and from a consuming desire to reproduce the spirit and life of Jesus.

Therefore, the function of the country church is to create, to maintain, and to enlarge both individual and community ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the Christian motive and teaching, and to help rural people to incarnate these ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort, in political development, and in all social relationships.

The church must bring men to God, and at the same time must lead in the task of building God's kingdom on earth.

The mission of the Christian church is that of its Founder: To teach the fatherhood of God and the

brotherhood of man as the ideal of life for the individual, the family, the community, and the nation, and to point out the best way to make the ideal the actual.

The Work of the Country Church

The Committee has divided the work of the country church into the following heads:

1. Knowledge.
2. Preaching and worship.
3. Religious education.
4. The church ministering to all the people.
5. The church, the servant of the community.
6. Cooperation among the churches.
7. Division of labor.
8. Administration and finance.
9. The preacher and his helpers.
10. The preacher, a community builder.
11. The country church circuit.

Under each one of these heads there is:

1. A statement of general policy:

Intended to apply to the church as a whole, or to any church. This policy is expected to be broad enough on the one hand to make the church "function," and on the other hand practical enough to serve as a guide for local church work.

2. A program for the local church:

This is by no means complete, but is a list of specific things that might be done by the local church. Probably no one church will do all of them, but every church can do some of them. Each church should adapt its program to its own needs and conditions,

but should always test the program in the light of a broad policy.

3. Suggestions and examples:

Under this head there is given a list of practical helps, either indicating literature or mentioning actual instances that show the practicability of many of the items in the suggested program.

I. Knowledge

POLICY

(1) Country church leaders, both preachers and laymen, should have a clear view of the fundamental aspects of the rural problem, and should broadly define the relationship of the church to that problem.

(2) The country church should make a survey of its field, to discover neglected individuals and families, to ascertain the conditions which determine its work, and to learn what movements are entitled to its guidance, interest, and support. Two or more churches serving the same community should cooperate in such a survey. The main results should be made public, but the rights of privacy should be duly guarded.

PROGRAM FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

(1) *a.* Put books, bulletins, and magazines on country life into public libraries and church libraries. (See lists furnished by Rural Department of Y. M. C. A.)

b. Import lecturers on country life from the agricultural colleges, church societies, Y. M. C. A., etc.

c. Have speakers on the subject of the rural prob-

lem, at church conventions, conventions of young people's societies, etc.

d. Hold county or district conferences of rural preachers to study the rural problem.

(2) *a*. Promote the community survey. Use some good standard survey such as that furnished by the Federal Council, by the Presbyterian board (Dr. Wilson), by agricultural colleges.

b. Encourage self-study by the community.

c. Chart results in graphic form so that material can be preserved and also made available for actual use.

II. Preaching and Worship

POLICY

The country church should foster private and public worship of God. Through its preaching it should bring a ringing spiritual message to the community, and interpret the gospel for the uplift of motive and the transformation and development of character.

PROGRAM

1. Preaching every Sunday in every field.
2. Emphasis on congregational singing.
3. Topics and texts with rural setting.
4. Religious use of special days, like Harvest Home, Rural Life Sundays, Thanksgiving, Farm Mother's Day, Easter,—with reference to rural environment.

III. Religious Education

POLICY

The country church should develop definite means of religious education, both of adults and of children, interpreting personal and social duty in terms of rural life, and applying what is learned in actual social service. To this end, the pulpit, the home, and the Sunday-school should definitely cooperate.

PROGRAM

1. Graded Bible instruction for children; adapted to the average country Sunday-school.
2. Instruction of adults through consecutive studies in sermonic material.
3. Mid-week and monthly conferences.
4. Rural Bible study.

IV. The Church Ministering to All the People

POLICY

While the country church should minister to the efficient and successful, to the end that it may hold the community through competent leadership, it should minister with special zeal to the ineffective, the poor, and the degenerate, since they also belong to Christ. The rapidly increasing instability of the rural population lays upon the church the special duty of religious and social helpfulness to the tenant farmer and the hired man.

PROGRAM

1. Organize clubs within the church for community service projects; bring in outside speakers at club dinners, etc., to discuss community work.

2. Utilize existing women's organizations for larger and more effective service.

3. Encourage use of the church building by organizations and societies.

4. Give public advocacy to various forms of social service, such as clean-up days, community picnics, play festivals, town improvement, Arbor day, beautifying cemetery or common, etc.

5. Preach contentment with rural life and adequacy of country as a life investment.

6. Make church sociables community affairs, if possible, with all welcome.

V. The Church the Servant of the Community

POLICY

The country church should regard itself as the servant of the entire community, and should be deeply concerned with all legitimate agencies in the community; it should give them support and promotion as there may be opportunity or need. It should suggest and inspire rather than instigate and supervise, but it may undertake any new service for which there is not other provision.

Cooperation with Other Agencies.—The church should recognize a division of functions in the com-

munity, and should cooperate with other institutions and organizations. Such adjustments are made individually for the most part, but by public advocacy and by its educational methods the church may exert its collective influence for all ends that may help to upbuild the community.

PROGRAM

Community movements should be instigated or aided by active cooperation, as the need may be, for such ends as the following:

1. Temperance, wherever the community is suffering from intemperance or lawlessness; a campaign for no-license or prohibition; law enforcement; Sabbath observance.
2. Public health and sanitation.
3. Good roads.
4. School education for rural life, and ordinarily consolidated schools.
5. Intellectual development by means of libraries, lectures, reading circles, clubs, and similar agencies.
6. Provisions for public recreation, and a Saturday half-holiday for agricultural laborers.
7. Promotion of demonstrations of recreation on church grounds if no better place can be had.
8. Better farming and better farm homes, with special stress upon extension work of agricultural colleges.
9. Beauty of village, roadsides, and private grounds.
10. Celebration of religious and patriotic holidays,

observance of old home week, and production of historical pageants.

11. Education of the people by preaching on community planning.

12. Establishment of a supervised social center or community house.

13. Local federation for rural progress and other community programs.

14. In general, promotion of cooperation among farmers in their production, buying, and selling.

VI. Cooperation among the Churches

POLICY

Groups of country churches, with natural and social affiliations, should unite for the study of their special field and for the more effective use of their resources in meeting its needs, thus forming a church federation. Churches may consolidate where only one church is needed in a community. In some communities a federated church may be practicable, an arrangement by which all churches in a community unite for worship and work, but each church society preserves its corporate identity.

PROGRAM

1. Union meetings for religious and patriotic purposes, song service, etc.

2. Community projects for various forms of community welfare, Christmas tree, etc.

3. Evangelistic campaign on the cooperative basis,

preceded by survey and followed by effective organized work.

4. Union campaigns on moral issues like temperance.
5. Cooperative surveys.
6. Cooperative boys' and girls' clubs.
7. Cooperative play festivals.
8. Cooperative community pageants.
9. Cooperation in athletic contests.

VII. Division of Labor

POLICY

Oftentimes the greatest efficiency of the church requires specialized agencies for special tasks. The rural Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A., the young people's societies, and other similar organized allies of the country church should therefore be utilized and encouraged where needed, and supported in their work.

PROGRAM

1. Furnishing leaders for special community tasks.
2. Encouraging financial support.
3. Special work with boys and girls.
4. Special work with young people.
5. Athletic league and recreation features.
6. Use of church buildings for these "allies of the country church."

VIII. Administration and Finance

POLICY

A sound business organization and an adequate financial policy are essential to the conduct of the

country church. This involves utilizing the available resources of a community, the relation of the local church to the Home Missionary Aid, the matter of minimum salaries for the resident ministers, and proper methods of financial accounting.

PROGRAM

1. Official boards and organizations regularly and completely organized with proper program of work.

2. Carefully kept records and regular reports of work in finances.

3. Systematic, community-wide, and adequate financial plan for local church support and benevolences.

IX. The Preacher and His Helpers

POLICY

A resident ministry is essential to the highest efficiency of the country church. He should be adequately trained to meet rural needs. Permanency of tenure should be sought by every possible means, including the payment of salaries commensurate with present economic needs and proportionate to ability and service. One of the greatest tasks of the pastor is to inspire, enlist, and train all available leadership on behalf of the full measure of the service of the church to its members and to the community.

PROGRAM

THE TRAINING OF CHURCH WORKERS

1. Every effort should be made to train leadership in the local church, such as Sunday-school teachers,

lay readers, elders, deacons, leaders of young people's societies, officers of the various organizations for old and young within the church.

2. Training in young people's meetings.
3. Training in Bible school.
4. Normal class leader and lectures.
5. Conferences and institutes.
6. Reading and correspondence courses.
7. Personal interviews.
8. Practice work for novices, including apprenticeship system.
9. Interchurch visitation.

X. The Preacher a Community Builder

POLICY

The immediate work of the pastor is with the local church to which he is responsible, but his efforts should by no means be confined to the church. The church should, as it were, lend its pastor to the community for such helpfulness to individuals, agencies, and causes as will definitely contribute to the building up of the community as a whole.

PROGRAM

The pastor may help in many or all of the tasks of rural community building that have been suggested heretofore in this outline on behalf of "better farming, better business, and better living."

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

S. L. Morris

Changed conditions, economic, social, educational, moral, and religious, are tremendously affecting modern life from every angle. A new era, dominated by new thought, new problems, new environs, and new ideals, has created a new world of thought and life. It is as if the old dispensation had passed away and a new dispensation had been ushered in.

Whether for better or for worse, leadership has passed from the country. Once it contained the mass of the people. Now the city is attracting not simply the floating population but the mechanical genius, the business skill, and the intellectual talent of the country. Once the country church, pastored by the highest type of intellectual and spiritual ministry, influenced the national life, setting the standard of morals and leading great revivals, resulting in religious upheavals, reaching to the remotest nooks and corners of the country. Now the scepter of leadership, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, is passing to the city. Is it the survival of the fittest?

The influence of the country on life and character can be only partially apprehended, even after an array of facts and figures as familiar as twice-told tales. Rural scenery and honest toil are calculated to make strong men physically, gigantic men intellectually, and clean men morally and spiritually. It is the psychological explanation of the recognized fact that the

country church was formerly the mother of teachers, statesmen, and theologians.

City churches are being recruited from the country not only in numbers but in moral fiber. "What are you doing, away out in the backwoods?" asked a city pastor of a country minister. "I am engaged," replied he, "in the work of helping you to save your city." If the church but appreciated the significance of this statement, it would recognize that the gifts of the rich city church to evangelize the country are in reality an indirect investment for its own salvation. If country life degenerates and the rural church disintegrates, where will come the moral force to counteract the degenerating influence of our increasingly corrupt cities?

Roosevelt's Country Life Commission sounded the keynote of the first great reform needed: "Any consideration of the problem of rural life that leaves out of account the function and possibilities of the church and of related institutions would be grossly inadequate, . . . because, from the purely sociological point of view, the church is fundamentally a necessary institution in country life."

One need not travel far afield to discover the causes resulting in the disintegration of the country church. Shifting populations are perhaps the most potent factor. Cities do not grow phenominally by means of their own natural increase. At the beginning of the nineteenth century less than four per cent. of the population was urban; but at present over forty-six per cent. live in the city.

The growth of the city is at the expense of the country, which is drained of its best blood and talent; and the social, educational, and commercial advantages of the city lure to these more attractive fields.

The tenant system of farming is paralyzing the energies of the religious forces. Men who do not own homes and who in all probability will change their dwelling-place by another year have no great incentive either to build or to maintain neighborhood churches. No wonder then that it has been said that greater than war, pestilence, and famine is the curse of landlordism.

The spiritual interests of the rural districts are subjected to absent treatment. The absentee pastor afflicts the church with his presence on Saturday evening, for once a month preaching, and he takes his flight by the earliest train on Monday. Only in the remotest degree does he touch the social or spiritual life of the community. The tenant system of farming is no greater curse to the country than the tenant ministry is to the country church.

This criticism of the tenant system of the ministry has no reference whatever to the noble army of itinerant preachers who have served as pioneers in destitute regions, nor to the self-denying pastors of groups which could not in any other way secure the services of the sanctuary. Such men are making the supreme sacrifice of life and are making the care of souls their chief concern.

The facts are easily ascertained and the reasons for

the disintegration of the country church will scarcely provoke debate. The chief consideration is the remedy. The effective remedy is the evangelistic pastor, whose earnest messages are inspired by genuine love of souls, inducing a revival all the year round, and who in every house ceases not "to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ."

Definite sacrifices must be made. "The preacher and his family must make their sacrifices as definitely as if they went to China or to Africa to preach the gospel." It is easier to die a martyr's death than to endure the lifelong martyrdom of a sacrificial life in an obscure pastorate. Let the church challenge her most promising men and see how many will respond. If the church can secure volunteers of this character it will be comparatively easy to save the country church; and it would carry conviction to the world if the greatest of all Christ's works were reproduced,—the preaching of the gospel to the poor.

The key to the situation is the country pastor. Illustrations are on record of marvelous results accomplished by such men as Matthew B. McNutt, C. O. Gill, Harlow S. Mills, and others. The same men with the same equipment and the same methods would succeed in almost any community or denomination. If we could secure a sufficient number of such men so as to constitute a chain, linking neighborhood to neighborhood, we can well imagine resuscitated communities and revived churches, till the country church becomes once more a great moral standard and a spiritual force throughout the bounds of the nation,

while the thrill of its revived life and expanding activities would reach " unto the uttermost part of the earth."

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE CHURCH AND COUNTRY LIFE

Warren H. Wilson

In proposing the form of organization of this Commission one must first consider what is the function of the Federal Council itself. It is one of several federations, each of which has a place as a service organization in united Protestantism. These organizations do not rule or govern one another, and they avoid competition with one another. This results in a division of function. The Federal Council is, therefore, one of the agencies in the list in which belong the Young Men's Christian Association, the Missionary Education Movement, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, and recently the Men and Religion Movement. These are financed separately, possess the allegiance of the churches, and serve, each of them, a definite purpose.

This is very characteristic of rural organization throughout the world. In the best organized country life we know the multi-cellular type prevails. Co-operative creameries have attached to them egg-gathering associations. Rural credit societies are as-

sociated with cooperative stores. But these various organizations are independent of one another. They do not govern one another, and they avoid competition.

What, therefore, is the function of the Federal Council among the great service organizations of American Protestantism?

I. It gets isolated workers together. It warms the heart of the aggressive Christian leader with a larger fellowship. It gives him a sense of wholeness wherewith to heal the individualism of denominational action. Our independence has forfeited for us our right to experience Christianity as one. We do not regret the price we pay for our religious liberty, but we value as a precious thing the meetings afforded us by the Federal Council.

II. The Federal Council in its various gatherings publishes the testimony of the churches to the unity of Christendom. It exalts the oneness of all these churches in the interests committed to various Commissions of the Council.

III. The Federal Council publishes a literature on unity.

IV. It investigates and publishes the conditions which affect all the churches alike.

V. The Federal Council sends deputations to certain civic and economic powers. It is a body big enough to command the attention of the President of the United States and its dignity is sufficient to enable it to represent the churches in the American Federation of Labor.

VI. The Federal Council regulates and guides the forces which work toward federation. I do not think the Federal Council has, or any of these federations and quasi-federations in the churches has, the power to initiate federation, but we have in the Council an agency capable of guiding the forces in the churches whenever federation is needed. This great body purges proposals of their false and unsound features. It furnishes typical forms, provides information as to experience, and is itself a great clearing-house whereby the forces working for federation may avoid competition with one another.

VII. The Federal Council does not at any time impair the influence of the church, but strengthens it. It works for the churches and confers upon them a great benefit in giving to each communion the weight and the support, the sanction and the fellowship, of every other communion.

Furthermore, let us ask what this Commission has done as a preliminary to suggesting what form of organization it most needs to-day.

First, this Commission has inherited the Gill and Pinchot Survey of Windsor County, Vermont, and Tompkins County, New York, which was published by the Macmillan Co. under the title, *The Country Church*. This Commission has collated, in the second place, and has at this meeting presented, reports, some of them careful and thorough, upon certain static aspects of the country church. This investigation has looked upon the church as an existing thing rather than as a progressive institution. They present a

static, not a dynamic view of the church. Third, through Mr. Gill's office in Columbus this Commission has investigated rural conditions in Ohio, with a view to county and state federations. And, fourth, it has assembled this Conference.

In view of this definition of the place of the Federal Council, and in view of the needs of the time, it seems to me that this Commission should organize along the following lines for the coming two years:

1. Avoiding duplication with the Missionary Education Movement, the Laymen's Missionary Movement, the Young Men's Christian Association, and other bodies of similar type, and utilizing their service as if we were an organic part of their work, the Commission should continue for the future to investigate rural conditions within definite limits. The brilliant record made by Mr. Gill as an investigator justifies a continuance of this function. There will for years to come be need of thorough and convincing work in the investigation of rural conditions. It is to be said here, however, that there is no longer need of investigation for propaganda purposes alone. The attention of the public has been commanded. We can now get a hearing when we ask it. We do not need to investigate every general appeal to the public as once we did. The time has come now when investigation should be harnessed to particular tasks. I believe, therefore, that the Commission should decide to limit the work of investigation to the function of preparing for definite action proposed. In Ohio we propose a definite action, namely: to organize the state and to organize the

counties of the state in the interest of the country church. In this state, therefore, investigation directed toward that end is being made. I believe that the Commission should direct its energies to the investigation of those fields in which federations may be proposed, and in which the service of this Commission is sought with that end in view.

2. The Commission should continue to publish in books and pamphlets and in newspaper articles the result of these investigations, and the reports otherwise made to it. There is a continuing need of printed matter on the country church, and a constant propaganda should be carried on in the interest of the country church.

3. The Commission should hold conferences for getting together the people who are interested in the country church. The annual conference held by the Young Men's Christian Association until last year rendered a great service, and, if the way is open, such a conference ought to be held by the Federal Council in a way to avoid interference with the Young Men's Christian Association. The Federal Council represents the churches organically, and, in spite of the fact that conferences do not legislate for the churches, their value is very great in bringing together those who have been working in lonely places without the privilege of intercourse and interchange of experience.

4. We believe that the Commission should champion the country church in legislative proposals now being considered. For instance, the discussion of rural credit is of great concern to the churches. No indi-

vidual church has the right—which the Federal Council has—to approach government officials, from the President of the United States to the humblest assemblyman. Such a Federal Council as we are should arrange for the advocacy of those legislative proposals which will assist the country church and for opposing those whose vicious character would injure the country church and community.

In the same connection, the Commission should define its position on the country school and should take active measures wherever opportunity offers, especially at Washington and at state capitals, to promote such reorganization of the country school as shall strengthen the country church of all denominations. With all frankness we should face the fact that we are working for those churches which are not in the Council as actively as for those churches which are within the Federal Council.

The Federal Council should also promote church activity, or, more precisely perhaps we should say, guide church activity along three lines.

1. It should further the organization of departments in the leading religious communions which shall advance the interests of the country church and conserve the rural congregations.

2. The Commission ought to prepare for the societies that are in the churches such literature and lesson studies, and ought to push the use of such methods as shall make the Sunday-school, the Endeavor Society, and kindred organizations directly useful to the country church.

3. The Commission ought to assist in the formation of state and county federations, where the churches are inclined to form these bodies. I do not think that the Federal Council can undertake, as a rule, to federate the churches. These local federations will arise of themselves. Furthermore, the Federal Council has a Commission to which is assigned the work of "federated movements." It will be the business of this Commission to promote federations, county and state in character. It should be our business to cooperate with these bodies and to direct along rural lines the work that they shall do.

To this end the Commission on the Church and Country Life ought to have, it seems to me, the following committees, and these committees should be intrusted with the right to pass upon all actions of the Commission or of its secretary within the lines of work assigned to these various committees respectively:

1. A Committee on Survey.
2. A Committee on Denominational Organizations and Societies.
3. A Committee on Legislation and Education.
4. A Committee on State and County Federations.
5. A Committee on Literature.

These five committees will do unpaid labor and, as far as we can see, for the future the most of the work of this Commission must be unpaid labor. Resources do not now appear for extending the work of the Commission through paid employees. The important thing is, therefore, to extend the Commission's work

by the hands of volunteers, and this will be secured when these volunteer committees are trusted, and when the Commission and its Secretary and its President take action only as approved by these various committees.

The financial problem of the Commission is an important one, but it does not seem wise that the Commission's work should be limited by the ability or inability of this Commission to raise a separate fund. Let us face the future with reliance upon the volunteer work of men who value this Commission so much that they are willing to spend some of their own money on car-fare, and some of their own time in service to the general cause.

It then remains that the Commission must find the means for certain definite work, as follows, that will require to be paid for:

1. Surveys.
2. Holding of conferences.
3. The publishing of the results of investigation.
4. Organization of federations.
5. The exerting of influence upon legislation.

All these cost money. We gratefully recognize the generous support which the Commission has had in the past from the large-hearted man whose foresight has created this work and called us together. In volunteering our services we recognize that the greater the body of volunteer work, the greater must be the expense of the central office. We believe this expense should be reduced to a minimum. There are too many causes now asking for money, and the Commission has

not found itself skilful in raising money. We recommend, however, that a Committee on Finance be appointed, to consist of five members, including the chairman, secretary, and three other members of the Commission appointed by the chairman.

In short, the scope of the Commission on the Church and Country Life should be national, representing all the churches, which shall cooperate with religious denominations in the nation. It shall investigate country conditions with a view to action exclusively. It shall publish the results of investigation and other material of interest to the churches of all denominations. It shall hold conferences for getting men together, at least one country church conference of national character once a year. It shall champion the country church in legislation for rural credit, for suitable educational reform, and it shall push the organization throughout the various churches of departments of church and country life, aiming to secure such a department in every one of the leading denominations. It shall advocate also suitable organization and literature, such as country churches need in Sunday-schools and young people's societies, and it shall also promote the interest of state and county federations. These interests will sufficiently occupy the Commission during the next two years and will lay a foundation for the future work of this body.

THE TRAINING OF THE RURAL MINISTRY

(*Report of Committee*)

GEORGE B. STEWART, *Chairman,* KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD, EDWIN L. EARP, G. WALTER FISKE, ARTHUR S. HOYT, FRANK A. STARRATT, WARREN H. WILSON.

Your Committee on the Training of the Rural Ministry would respectfully report as follows:

It has not been possible for the Committee to hold a meeting, but it has carried forward its work by correspondence. The conclusions of this report, while not the unqualified expression of the opinion of the members of the Committee, may be said fairly to summarize the several opinions held by them.

We take pleasure in presenting in its entirety for the careful consideration of those concerned with the solution of the important problems covered by this subject, "A Tentative Program for the Better Training of Rural Ministers," prepared by a committee of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches. This committee is a pioneer in this field of education and has given much attention to its task. This tentative program has much to commend it to favorable consideration and has already received approval in its main items of the seminaries of Greater Boston.

"A Tentative Program for the Better Training of Rural Ministers, Massachusetts Federation of Churches:

I. For Theological Students

"A. Principles of Preparation.

"Students who look forward to the rural ministry should have:

"1. A thorough knowledge of the English Bible, as fundamental to their interpretation of the Christian religion. This would include the history of the life and thought of the Hebrew people, both in Old and New Testament times, an intimate acquaintance with the life and teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, and correct methods of interpretation.

"2. A resonably good command of the philosophy of religion, and the doctrines of Christianity as they have developed in the church, and of the influence of Christianity upon society at large.

"3. An understanding of religious psychology and rural sociology, that they may enter intelligently and sympathetically into individual, family, and community life, and be of spiritual and social service to each.

"4. Training in methods of approach to the people as preachers, pastors, and religious educators, and instruction in the best methods of effective organization of the forces of the church and the community.

"5. Instruction in making rural surveys and experience with pastorates in the country, in order to acquire adequate material for community leadership.

"6. A conviction of the importance of the rural ministry as a life-work, and willingness to give at least five years to the building up of a single community in the true missionary spirit.

"B. Course of Study.

"1. Their curriculum in the seminary should include biblical literature, history, and interpretation; the history of Christianity, especially in its modern period in America; with research work and reports on rural movements and biography; theology—biblical, historical, and systematic; homiletics and pastoral methods; general sociology and the specific problems of the rural church; and psychology and pedagogy, with special study of the rural Sunday-school.

"2. Elsewhere than in the seminary, they should make a study of agriculture, including farm practice and management and the application of science to farm problems; agricultural economics, including cooperation and market distribution; farm business methods; and advanced rural sociology, including rural education, art, and literature, recreation, sanitation, and social organization. These may be pursued by means of summer schools, correspondence courses, or one or two years in an agricultural college.

II. For Settled Ministers

"Men already in the ministry should have an opportunity to supplement their previous training and to receive occasional stimulus.

"1. Through Summer Schools, in sessions of two weeks or more, consisting of forenoon lectures, one of which shall deal with a phase of the rural church problem; afternoon conferences and excursions, and evening addresses of an inspirational nature.

"2. Through Addresses and Conferences at church

associations and conventions, wherever representatives of rural church interests come together.

"3. Through Rural Institutes, where speakers from seminaries, the Young Men's Christian Association, the agricultural college, and other rural agencies may discuss their common interests and lay plans for co-operation.

"4. Through Correspondence Courses, maintained by seminary and agricultural college, through which the student may keep in touch with the most recent investigations and conclusions.

"5. Through such local groups as reading clubs, improvement societies, and other agencies of local betterment, which shall unite all the progressive forces of the community."

It will appear from what follows that your committee is in substantial agreement with this Committee of the Massachusetts Federation of Churches. It would seem that this report assumes an antecedent cultural course and general theological training. Otherwise, it would be open to serious criticism, as lacking in necessary foundation preparation for the special training admirably outlined in it.

Your committee finds that the task set for it falls naturally into four divisions.

I. The Training of the Theological Student

1. The country minister must be as strong a man and as thoroughly equipped as any other minister.

In the treatment of the country church and the coun-

try minister this vital fact is too frequently overlooked. It is an initial blunder that is responsible in a large degree for the pitiable plight of many rural parishes. Those charged with the preparation of young men for ministry in the country must recognize that it is a waste of effort to train men who have not initiative, capacity for leadership, intellectual endowment. It goes without saying that the young man must be good, for spiritual qualities are indispensable. But he must also be good for something, if he is to be a country pastor.

This conviction that the rural minister must be a man whose endowment is of a very high order is fundamental to the satisfactory solution of the country church problem. The men who in the past have adequately served the country church, the men who are doing it to-day qualify in this respect. It must be understood that no other grade need apply.

2. The curriculum should provide for the thorough training of the country minister in things fundamental. It is difficult to think that he can have a too complete scholarly equipment for his task. Above all things his training should be of that quality which would cultivate his powers of observation, reflection, concentration, and persistent intellectual toil. If he is to function properly in his sphere he must have his intellectual powers well in hand and at his command. He cannot be too well informed. He cannot be too accurate a thinker. He cannot be too intellectually forceful. It would, therefore, be the poorest sort of pedagogy that would sacrifice his general culture for specialized prac-

tical training. Therefore, all those biblical and other studies which are regarded by any seminary as fundamental to the Christian ministry should be regarded as fundamental for him.

In no case should he be thought to be inferior in social attainments or intellectual gifts and still be thought to be suited to a country parish because of this inferiority. Our country ministers and our country churches must be made to feel a self-respect that is not possible so long as they are regarded as not quite the equals of their city contemporaries.

3. In specializing for this work the seminary might, with great profit, add to its general courses, elective courses in "the country church as a community center," "rural sociology," "rural social organization," "rural social engineering," with a view to informing the student in the social problems he will face in the parish and the position he must fill as the leader. He must be trained for leadership.

This should not require him to be trained in agriculture. It is unreasonable to ask the seminary to add this large department of culture to its already overcrowded curriculum, and it is equally unreasonable to exact of the minister, of whom already so much is required, that he should be informed in the farmer's job. All that is required of him is that he should be sympathetically and intelligently interested in the work of the farm. The farmer, no more than the city pewholder, expects or desires his minister to be an expert in any other than his own job. If he is this he will meet all the demands of his country parish. And he

should be an expert in his own sphere. He must know his own job down to the smallest detail. Time taken from perfecting himself in this, even if it is spent in learning the job of the farmer, is misspent.

4. The student for the ministry must have a vision of the new country church. The day is past, if it ever really existed, when the country minister can meet the demands of his parish solely in the conventional pastoral way. The country church must adjust itself to the community as its servant, and its pastor must be the leader of this social group and the director of it as a community force. To give him this vision and to prepare him for this leadership is essential in the preparation of the theological student.

5. The student for the ministry must be alive to the religious character of his mission. He and his church are to utilize the religious forces, present the religious ideals, promote the religious interests, and develop the religious life of the community. They are the representatives of religion, and it is for them to make religion effective. This is the point at which the church and the minister are to function. The community depends upon them to furnish the religious ideals, religious motive, religious inspiration, religious power. If they fail to do this, the community is deprived of the most potent forces for its uplift, for the furnishing of which they are constituted.

II. The Training of Young Men who Omit the Seminary

It is said that there is a large body of men who go direct from college, or from high schools, to the country parishes without any theological training. The number is reckoned by some of our committee as high as eighty-five per cent. of those entering the ministry. This body of country ministers creates a field for the seminary which must not be overlooked or neglected.

Your committee is of the opinion that it is more a denominational than a seminary matter, as there is wide divergence among the denominations in their practice at this point. The theory and policy regarding the training of ministers is widely divergent, and it would seem that it is incumbent upon those denominations that encourage this practice to provide the training that these members of their clerical body need for the discharge of their professional duties. Your committee does not feel itself sufficiently advised as to the various elements in the problem thus presented to be qualified to make suggestions that would have more than general value. Some of the suggestions made in other parts of this report may be of service to the class of men referred to in this section.

III. The Training of Country Pastors for Larger Efficiency

Your committee offers the following suggestions to this end:

1. These ministers need refilling along all lines of

their intellectual life. Whatever special equipment they may need in view of their immediate work they must, above all things, avoid the narrowing effects of intensive specialization. They, therefore, must preserve their interest in intellectual matters apart from and beyond those immediately involved in the rural life and work which are theirs. They ought to do general reading. They must do strenuous study on some theological, scientific, literary, or other subject.

2. They should also follow some well-devised scheme of reading and study in rural matters. Here they should become specialists, and they can only become such by severe toil. As has been said, they do not have to become farmers or even know much about farming, but they do need to know the economic, social, moral, and religious problems of the rural community and know how to utilize the economic, social, moral, religious forces for the uplift of their rural communities. What they knew last year will not answer for this year. They must progress. To remain stationary is fatal to their effectiveness.

3. The country minister must supply himself with the inspiration, the enthusiasm, the facilities for keeping up his equipment and preserving himself at the highest efficiency. There is not much of these to come to him from his field. His great peril is intellectual inertia and indolence. He must sit constantly as a sentinel over his life, or he will without perceiving it drift into a helpless and hopeless state of self-satisfaction and laziness. Perhaps his most serious problem is himself, for it is a most difficult thing to keep one's

self to concert pitch, when there is little or no stimulus to do it from one's surroundings. Yet he must do it. The one hope of the rural minister against the fatal peril of stagnation is that he himself will seize every opportunity to stimulate and enrich his mental and spiritual life.

4. Summer schools offer excellent opportunities for help to the country minister.

There are many of these schools in various parts of the country, and some of them are connected with theological seminaries. The seminary furnishes an ideal atmosphere for this kind of professional revival. It is an educational center where the ideals are intellectual, and at the same time are chastened and enriched by the religious spirit. The inducements to study are potent, while the inducements to pleasure or rest are reduced to a minimum. The classroom and not platform are featured. Work is the watchword and work is what the minister needs most. Work under the wise guidance of expert teachers, work in some severe theological or other discipline, work in the midst of surroundings that suggest and provoke it. The seminary summer school furnishes this atmosphere and these stimuli to the rural minister.

There should be due recognition in the curriculum of the school of both general theological studies and specialized practical courses.

The ministers who are alive to the possibilities of their calling will be the first to see the value of such schools and will allow nothing trivial to deprive them of their benefits. To men on small salary the item of

expense is often felt to be prohibitive. Churches could hardly make a wiser investment than by sending their pastors to one of these schools. They should put the item in their annual budget.

5. Short courses at theological seminaries are desirable for ministers.

For pastors in service there is the greatest need of educational provision. Of all professions the ministry has the least attention from the university or from the theological seminary. After the minister is once graduated he is left to shift for himself and nothing much is done to make him a better preacher, a better shepherd of the flock, a better administrator of the affairs of the parish.

To this end short courses should be provided by the seminaries for the ministers in service. They might be for a semester or a half of a semester. In these he should have teachers rather than text-books, seminar or laboratory work in addition to lectures. Every man who has been out in the pastorate for five years should aim to get this sort of a release from his pastoral work and go up to a seminary for eight or fifteen weeks. The emphasis that he needs is not inspirational but intellectual and therefore the seminary is the place to which he should go. The seminary might easily arrange the schedule of the undergraduate classes so as to make some if not all of these short courses part of the undergraduate work, and thus bring these pastors into the scholastic atmosphere of the regular seminary classroom, which would be a great gain to the pastors.

The wider the range of these short courses the better for ministers, as in this way they will have a large range of subjects from which to make selection, and a larger variety of needs and desires may be met. If a narrow range of subjects is alone possible, then there should be a fair division between fundamental subjects, such as some biblical course or a church history course, and specialized subjects, such as rural economics or rural sociology.

6. Correspondence courses for ministers are desirable. Extension work by the seminaries, through correspondence, ought to be well organized and vigorously prosecuted. In this way the seminaries might carry a continuous stream of influence from the centers of sacred learning to many parish studies where outside intellectual influences might not otherwise penetrate. These courses might cover as wide a range of theological and allied disciplines as the seminaries might find themselves able to manage.

IV. The Training of Lay Leaders

This is an important and at the same time a difficult part of the task of bringing the country church to its best development. It is all too frequently the case that the most serious obstacle to the efficiency of the country church are the men and women who by every consideration should be the progressive leaders but are in fact obstinate obstructionists. These persons are often found among the officials. Many a pastor has come to his task with a vision of the opportunities and the duties of the church, or has received a fresh vision

of these, and with enthusiasm and hope has sought to put his vision into form and substance, only to find that the men and women who could help are determined upon hindering him.

Even under the most favoring conditions of pastoral efficiency, the effectiveness of the country church depends in large degree upon trained lay leadership. Earnest attention must be given to the task of providing adequate training for these leaders. This may be accomplished in the following ways:

1. The pastor should establish classes for the study of local church and community problems, economics, sociology, church history; organize committees for community betterment along one or more lines; arrange for lecture courses with a view to community enlightenment; and in other ways utilize local facilities and talent.

2. Little schools of religion should be organized by theological seminaries in successive communities under the administration of some member of their faculties. They should be held for a week for the serious study of the Bible, church finance, church efficiency, sociology, economics, religious education, and other subjects according to local needs and conditions. Possibly the more mature students could be used as helpers in these schools, and local people should be largely used, even though they may be poorly qualified. Wisely managed, these schools may be immensely helpful to both pastors and people in many ways and would constitute a most valuable form of seminary extension.

3. Seminaries should maintain summer schools for

laymen. There are already many conferences and assemblies which are of value and there is small need to add to their number. But there is need for real schools where laymen may be systematically instructed in things pertaining to the present church problems and their solution. There is no better place for these schools than the institutions where their pastors are instructed in the same subjects, and there are no better teachers for them than the teachers at whose feet their pastors have sat. The atmosphere of the seminary is favorable to the ends of schools for laymen. Under the conditions thus suggested the benefit to the lay student of a two-weeks' serious study and the resulting advantage to the churches and communities are not easily measured.

It may seem that your committee has elaborated an extensive program, one, in fact, so extensive as to be practically impossible. We are not so optimistic as to think that all of these things can be done at once by any one institution, or one man, or one group of men. But it is our hope that out of these various suggestions different pastors and churches may be able to make a selection of something that is adaptable and workable in the conditions in which they have to work. We venture to think that every minister and every church that wish to come to larger efficiency may find a way to accomplish this desire, if they seek for it with all their heart. It may be that in this report they may find some suggestions that will be of help to them in their search.

TRAINING FOR THE RURAL MINISTRY

V. G. A. Tressler

It goes without saying that there must be training, and already there is great advance; for not so very long ago a great part of the American Church was quite dubious as to the necessity of much, if any, ministerial training for the country worker. But we are in the age of training—training, if you please, for efficiency—and all of us are restlessly alive to its value, its insistency, its primacy. The church is, and it is to be. We are not alarmed about its future. It has a mission, a message, and a ministry.

There is to be a church, and it is to have a ministry. We will grant these two points. This ministry is for all the world, and this ministry is to be equipped for all the world, country and city. How? It is a problem, not easy, and yet not so difficult as to defy solution.

The difficulty very largely is our own. We are defining ministry in the terms of specialization sheerly. I am frank to say that in this I hold we mistake. But must we specialize for efficiency? Yes and no! Recently a questionnaire came to my notice on the effect of the present world war on higher education. Almost all the educators felt that the effect of the war educationally would be very great—great biologically, sociologically, economically, historically, and pedagogically. That is, the teaching of these subjects would be shifted somewhat owing to the new condi-

tion caused by the war. But no one thinks that biology will have changed its principle because of the war, or that philosophy will have shifted its categories, or that history will be enabled to dispense with any of its totality of historic fundamentals. The principles of all these subjects abide—only the emphasis shifts. Is it not just so with the rural ministry? It is *rural;* yes,—that is merely locative, incidental. *Rural* is the qualitative term only; but *ministry*—that is the determinative, the fundamental, the character-giving, significant thing. It is a *rural* ministry. That is the application in time and space. But it is a *ministry;* that is the essential content. It is not a thing of shreds and patches, of township lines or county bounds or confines of a commonwealth. This rural ministry is really not a rural ministry at all in its most cogent definition. It is only a rurally localized ministry of an inherently illocalized grace. True, it deals with a situation—the situation and condition of the century, the year, the locality, the season, and all that. Granted. It cannot overlook the character and condition of its populace, whether miners or farmers or shopmen or schoolmen. Certainly not. Yet we must insist that the *rural* is not the determining factor. That factor is *ministry*—"the ministry," the gospel ministry, the "apostolos," the "sent one," the "karux," the herald, the "angelos," the messenger; the man who truly, like the early apostles, goes out and is quite confident that "we are witnesses of these things." So we notice after all the real minister is not a *rural* minister; he

is a rural *minister*. It is not the *country* condition that is the chief thing; it is the *human* condition. Ah, yes! But the situation is bad, you say—poor crops, renters, bad land, mean spirit, little cooperation, general lassitude, inhibition of the civic motor centers. A bad situation! Let us see. It may be even captious to remark that the ministry of the gospel is not said to save from a situation at all, though it incidentally, doubtless often, does that also; but rather to save from —let me say it—to save from sin. "Being made free from 'the situation.'" "You being dead through your 'situation.'" "Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for 'the situation.'" It scarcely sounds natural, does it?

It is not social service as such the ministry conserves, but a deeper thing, and one which undoubtedly results in social service. The Old Testament speaks of the poor, but Christ of "the poor in spirit," and to them is a kingdom—the kingdom of heaven. The Old Testament speaks of hunger, but Christ of "those that hunger and thirst after righteousness." "The gospel is the glad tidings of benefits that pass not away. Its end is redemption and not social improvement." This is the characteristic way in which Adolf Harnack begins his treatise on the "Social Gospel." No one thinks that Professor Harnack is theologically straitened, nor that he is cramped in his definition by dogmatic presumptions.

The rural ministry, then, is to be, and, by rights, ought to be, prepared for its end. That end, according to Harnack, is redemption.

But this redemptive end has also its corollaries with reference to this life. There is the quietistic principle —"Fear not"—acquiesce in the leadings of God. But the same authority that commands, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," turns to other men among whom we live and says, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Here we have the principle of love as a social regeneration. "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; . . . I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

H. A. Franke, who did Christlike orphan work in Halle in 1694, received the impulse to his world-famed work by Paul's word: "God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." The rural minister of the gospel gets his cue, like the rest of us, here. The cup of cold water—that is for the twentieth century. The social uplift necessary must be given. But it must be given *in his name,* and the recipient must know it. The rural minister must be trained to see; and hence must be sharp to see the need. He ministers. It is to the man and for the man in the country, but it is in the power of the Son of man, and with his sanction. It is to the community and for the community, in the power of the kingdom of God.

Pastor Wichern, the founder of the Inner Mission, so greatly helpful to Europe and America, puts it this way: It is "the collective and not isolated labor of love which springs from faith in Christ, and which seeks to bring about the internal and external renewal

of the masses within Christendom who have fallen under the dominion of those evils which result directly and indirectly from sin; and who are not reached, as for their spiritual renewal they ought to be, by the established official organs of the church. It does not overlook any external need, the relief of which can be made an object of Christian love. It recognizes the Christ-bought and indestructible unity of life in state and church, in the nation and family, in all the ranks of Christian society, and lays hold of it with its saving powers. And amid the extraordinary and distorted conditions of the present, before which those in authority are impotent, and the church is silent, it distinguishes the voice of the people as those who ask for its saving work." The *rural* minister must be trained for this. Again Wichern says: "The Inner Mission is the unfolding and active exercise of the faith and vital powers of the entire body of believers . . . for the conquest of everything unchristian and antichristian that seeks or has found a place in the home or community." Also for this the rural minister must be trained.

May I quote again the Lutheran Church's idea as to how this rural minister has to be trained,—an idea expressed in a report adopted in May, 1915, in developing and urging upon the church this cult of the Inner Mission? "The primary idea is the aim to realize a wonderful vision of the Christian church—one which the present age can well understand. It is a true vision of what the church must be. It is one which has been seen in our country very dimly by

institutional churches, Men and Religion Forward Movements, social service, men's and women's and young people's societies, etc.; but they have been beholding very narrowly and uncertainly what Inner Mission has for years been seeing.

" This idea is to realize the universal priesthood of all believers; to reestablish the primitive ideal of Christianity, so that loving service to a needy world becomes the manifest sign wherever there is a Christian; to have the church (the *entire* church, mark it) prove her faith by her saving love. It is thus the idea of Inner Mission to put the entire so-called laity into the Samaritan attitude of vital, personal touch with need. The prime aim must, therefore, always be *congregational* development. The unused strength of members is to be developed and the minister must be trained for this. There must be an increased force of real Christian ministry in every rural congregation. Inner Mission's ideal is to have the entire conscious church in service. It emphasizes the constantly forgotten, despised fact that it is *the church* (not just pastors and deaconesses) to which the commission is given of carrying out Christ's work upon earth. Rural congregations must more largely gain the idea of personal, loving service of men for Jesus' sake. Inner Mission is the church's endeavor to make real to-day what Christ was in his day—a person going about doing good; it is the Christ of yesterday and to-day, going about in the person of his members, applying the balm of Gilead to the world's open sore, whether mental, moral, or physical—and always, as with Christ, for

the purpose of reaching the depth of the wound, sin.

"It is manifest thus that, were this ideal of Inner Mission fully realized, many present institutions of mercy would not be needed at all. For instance, no homes for orphans or for the aged would be needed; for every orphan and lonely aged person would find that some Christian household was glad to provide in its own circle a loving home. No hospice would be needed in any city, for every strange young man going to a city from the country would be welcomed to the fireside of some Christian family."

But what has this to do with the training? Everything,—for we must first have the diagnosis and then the prescription. Now then, we come to the training for it!

At least *one fact* is patent. There must be certainty about the thing which the rural minister has to do with. Principal Forsyth says the church has exchanged certainty for sympathy. Mr. Berle in his *Christianity and the Social Rage* well says: "The prevailing theory of religious teaching seems to be that the facts of religion, and especially the facts of biblical history, can be preached in a perfectly dispassionate way, and that this is religious teaching. But, as a matter of fact, this is not religious teaching, and cannot ever become such. . . . Mr. Webster, in his great speech on Samuel Dexter, uses these words: 'He had studied the Constitution that he might defend it. He had examined its principles that he might maintain them. . . . His inference seemed demonstration. The earnestness of his own conviction wrought conviction in others. One was

convinced, and believed, and assented, because it was gratifying, delightful, to think, to feel, and believe, in unison with an intellect of such evident superiority. . . . He studied the Constitution that he might defend it.' This is no accidental choice of words. Mr. Webster knew exactly what he meant when he chose the word 'defend.' Now the teaching of religion, in a peculiar and exceptional sense, requires just this element. Religious opinions, and especially religious faith, are always in danger of assault by the careless, the unbelieving, and the ungodly. It is notorious that no opinions in this world have to run the gauntlet of indifference and hostility to the degree that religious opinions do. Therefore it requires, in a peculiar and exceptional sense, an underpinning of conviction girded with weapons of defense. . . . Observe again, if you please, the vocabulary which Mr. Webster employs in speaking of Samuel Dexter's persuasiveness in his pleading: 'One was convinced, and believed, and assented.' Is not this the language which we habitually employ in religion? Is it not the supremest purpose of all Christian teaching to convince, to cause to believe, and to win assent? And if, as Mr. Webster says, conviction, namely, a position to maintain and uphold, is necessary to secure these results in the law, how much more true is it in the matter of religion! The attitude of intellectual catholicity in these matters is the merest pretense. Men cannot be colorless in religion. Convictions are convictions precisely because they have color, and are differentiated from other convictions. The idea that religion can be taught, or that

anything but the barest facts of religious history can be taught, without at the same time having in the preacher a great passion to win his hearers to his own attitude of obedience and reverence, is as absurd as to imagine that merely to cause a sick man to look at a prescription is to take effective measures for his restoration. . . . The objective point in rural or city religious instruction is to convince: that involves advocacy. Its purpose is to secure belief: that involves conviction. Its aim is to gain assent: that involves faith in the thing expounded. . . . Better far indefensible doctrine with a brave heart and an unswerving faith behind it, than a defensible doctrine with a wavering, insecure, dilettante proclaiming of it. We plead for conviction in teaching."

But a recent report of social conditions in New England states that seventy-five per cent. of the ministers were inadequate in general educational equipment. This is to be remedied—is already remedied—by the focalizing of the attention of the whole church upon the vast importance of the rural field. If the church holds it important, then young men in the ministry will do the same. They will look toward it buoyantly, ardently. They will esteem what the church esteems. But the minister holds the key to the situation. He must beget a new rural consciousness, a new unity and community. He must deepen the sense of the church's mission, life, ideals, service, and sacrifice. He must raise the church's estimate of itself, of its local power, because it is a church. The rural ministry must get the country's strong men, its stored-up vitality, its

reserves of energy, and its independence, and hook them up in and for the gospel. But how? First, the rural ministry must have a *native* strength—no cheap men, no low-grade men for the rural church. No low-grade men for the church anywhere; in any event, not in this time of ours. Our rural minister, fitted naturally, must be further fitted by a general theological education, a theological education of the twentieth century, but still a theological education, and not, preeminently, any other. For the minister must be equipped in the field of the spirit; that is his specialty. "On its divine side it includes God in Christ; on its human side the soul. From the near view it is concerned with the commonplaces of conduct and character; from the far view with the mysteries of immortality and revelation." And hence the minister must have a wide range of knowledge, for all problems are included in his function in the country as well as in the city.

The rural minister is to be trained to be a preacher. Phillips Brooks has said that preaching is "the communication of truth by man to man. It has in it the two elements, truth and personality." The rural minister must have both. The training, therefore, must consist, *first,* in that natural selection which will find and develop proper personalities—men who understand the quality of the task and are not daunted thereby; and, second, in the injection, if you please, into these ministerial workmen the graces of the gospel, that is, the present-day applications of an abiding grace. In other words, they must have that training

which will hold them to the distinctly spiritual point of view.

May I here append a most expressive excerpt from a recent widely read periodical? "There are certain spheres of influence in which a minister is at a discount because of his professional standing. But he is not thereby shut out from a part in the development of modern society. Jesus did not legislate by specific acts, regulations, and by-laws, but by the proclamation of determinative principles. Those principles are as applicable to-day as they were sixty generations ago.

"It is the minister's privilege to show the relevance of those principles to modern life; to bring them to bear upon such problems as local option, factory regulation, child labor, workmen's compensation, capital and labor, trade competition, penology, and a hundred kindred themes. If he can lay the divine compulsions of such principles upon the men who fall within his pastoral domain, he will have become a social, civic, and political power of the first order without jeopardizing his influence by plunging into a game for which he has had no training and to which he cannot give adequate time without sacrificing his own unique responsibilities and privileges. The minister's chief opportunity, therefore, lies in filling his lay units—men, women, and children—with the ideals and enthusiasms of righteousness, that they may carry the gospel incarnate into every engagement and relationship of every day.

"Now if the clergyman can flood the souls of men and women with the life of God, all the problems of

the church will be mere minor affairs; just questions of methods and mechanics of application. The standard of the minister to-day is to keep his people in touch with the Source of spiritual energy, and thus make the spasmodic, forlorn-hope revivalistic campaign superfluous. When men and women are athrob with divine motives, they will quickly find effective modes of expression, and the church will serve the community in many forms of constructive, social, civic, and ameliorative service. It is the deliberate opinion of those who have studied the church most carefully, from both the inside and the outside, that its problem is qualitative rather than quantitative, an organic question rather than a question of organization."

Very well, then, we will train for this!

THE EDUCATION OF THE RURAL MINISTRY

W. K. Tate

In the admirable report just presented by the Committee I find this thought which I shall use as my text: "The main perils of the country minister are intellectual indolence and stagnation, and if he is to escape these perils he must be his own guardian and guide." I should modify the sentence to read as follows: The main perils of the country minister are intellectual indolence and stagnation and a failure to interpret the

message of Christ in terms of rural life; if he is to escape these perils, he must catch a new vision of the country and must have a different sort of education from that which he has received in the past.

It is conceivable that any kind of education to which a man earnestly devotes his energies might give him the capacity of persistent mental toil, might cultivate his powers of observation, reflection, and insight, might produce what we ordinarily call a well-disciplined mind, and might give to the possessor a keen relish for intellectual pursuits related to his field of study. It is difficult, however, to think of intellectual momentum generated in a special realm of ideas as able to project itself into an unfamiliar realm dominated by strange ideas and to continue there its energy indefinitely. The education which we have been giving our ministers has not intellectualized the country environment and activity.

I once knew a Jewish scholar who came over from Russia to America. He was well educated in the language and lore of his people. By chance he was thrown into a commercial community into whose activities he could not enter with knowledge or sympathy. Deprived of the impulse of old associations, his scholarly habits gradually disintegrated without a corresponding adaptation of mental life to new stimuli. The result was stagnation and decay. This is a common tragedy among our immigrant population. The minister trained in the ordinary theological seminary who goes to a country charge is in like manner an immigrant into conditions which his course of

study does not enable him to interpret intellectually. In the city he is associated with men of similar training in an intellectual world where symbols are not habitually reduced to hard, plain realities, where checks, commercial, intellectual, and spiritual pass freely at face value and the substantial gold is rarely demanded. In this environment he is able to maintain a certain continuity in mental life which at least conceals the evidences of bankruptcy. When he goes back to the country, however, he enters a world in which his scholastic counters are not accepted as coin of the realm. The gradual retirement of these counters from circulation we call mental stagnation; " the indisposition or inability to acquire a capital of solid realities based on the eternal facts of nature and life, we call " indolence."

We are not surprised at the discomfort of such a man in the country. For years he has lived in the world of Moses, Isaiah, and St. Paul, in a laudable effort to discover the spiritual message of the ages. He has studied the customs, philosophies, and languages of ancient peoples as the media through which divine truth has been revealed to man. Gradually he comes to live in this ancient world; it becomes his source of story and illustration; his speech is filled with conventional phrases taken from its literature, phrases which were once pregnant with meaning but are now empty symbols. He forgets that the truth, to become vital in the lives of modern farmers, must be delivered to them in the living language of today. How otherwise can it be recognized as a message?

We forget too easily that the entire life and teaching of the Master Teacher were a protest and a revolt against formalism, tradition, and ritualism in religion and a statement of eternal truth in the every-day language of his hearers. They "were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."

The country preacher must know the country and country people. As he walks by the wayside the plants, the flowers, the birds, the insects, the crops, and the people must appeal to his eyes and his ears. The flower in the crannied wall and the stars overhead must help reveal God and man. The commonplace things around him must suggest thought and prevent mental stagnation and indolence. Christ delivered his message to farmers in terms of their farm activities. The sower who went forth to sow, the grain of mustard seed, the wheat and the tares, the sheep that had gone astray, and all the other matchlessly simple stories of the Kingdom conveyed truth to farmers in the language of farm life. If he were to speak a personal message to American farmers to-day, he would doubtless deliver these truths in terms of silos, crop rotation, animal husbandry, seed selection, cooperation, and the other facts of modern agriculture.

The training of the country minister should include the following: (1) the sciences underlying farm life, especially the biological sciences; (2) enough agriculture to allow the free use of this subject as a source of illustration; (3) constructive rural sociology; (4) rural recreation; (5) a study of the changing ideals of

rural education; (6) rural economics, especially as it relates to community organization.

These subjects should be included in the course even if their inclusion should make necessary the elimination of Greek, Hebrew, comparative religion, or other subjects which are now a part of the theological course. That the old course of training for ministers does not meet country needs is evident from the fact that the churches which have insisted most strongly on an educated ministry have all but disappeared from the country. The type of education which the minister received really unfitted him for rural service and left this field to denominations which are less exacting in their educational demand. The trouble has been not too much education but the wrong kind.

The church and the school are the two social institutions of the country. These two institutions must divide between them the field which in the city would be parceled out among a dozen social organizations. The training of the country minister must be much broader and more general than that required of the city preacher. His activities must be much more varied. In assuming some of these new duties the church has numerous precedents. The Roman Catholic priest was the original farm demonstration agent in America. The church has always exercised some supervision over amusement and recreation. The rural clergyman in Ireland, in Denmark, and in Germany is usually the leader in the great cooperative movement which has revolutionized rural life in those countries. The country church is the primary source of church-

membership both for country and city; that church will survive which trains its ministers to meet the new conditions which now confront rural life in America.

The country church not only needs preachers who appreciate country life and who are especially trained to work in country communities, but it also needs intelligent lay workers and teachers who have been especially trained for rural service. Evidently the training of these workers offers the finest field of service for the church college in America. Many of these colleges have not yet found themselves. They are merely liberal arts colleges of the older type whose aims are to develop Christian character and to disseminate the principles of religion. They occupy positions of influence and their patronage is largely drawn from the rural section. If their aims and purposes were made more definite and their curriculum included courses in rural sociology, rural education, agriculture, rural economics, and other subjects offering definite training for rural leadership, they might easily within fifty years revolutionize country life and the country church in America.

FINANCING THE COUNTRY CHURCH

(*Report of Committee*)

G. Walter Fiske, *Chairman*, C. P. Dodge, A. R. Mann, A. E. Roberts, J. P. Sanderson.

In studying this problem your Committee realize that they are confronted by one of the two most serious and persistent difficulties of the country church. The trite witticism that the rural ministry is "trying to live on earth and board in heaven" is not far from the facts. How thousands of country ministers live is a mystery this Committe will not attempt to explain, for they are certainly not paid a living salary, a salary sufficient to support a family. When it is true that the *average* salary of country ministers is less than $600, it is seen at once that thousands of men must be receiving considerably less to bring the average so low. Hod-carriers in New York earn $900 a year; but in one large denomination in America the country ministers are reported to receive on the average $325. It is obvious that these ministers must supplement their income by other work during the week or else depend upon the labor of their wives and children.

It is not necessary for this report to recite stories of hardships endured by country ministers, often heroically suffered uncomplainingly, and shared by patient, devoted wives who bear the burden even more directly than their husbands. We will not waste time proving an axiom. The pitiably meager salaries paid by thousands of country churches are below the level of un-

skilled laborers' wages, below the minimum wage on which a family can be decently supported, and far below the level of efficiency. The primary question is, *Why* are these salaries so low? A variety of answers should be suggested. It is fair to admit that some local churches are too poor to pay larger salaries. It is true that most professionally trained ministers are receiving living salaries and that the smallest salaries are paid the untrained men. It is evident that there is an oversupply of untrained preachers, and this is depressing salaries just as wages are depressed in any trade by a surplus of labor. In most denominations it is so easy to get into the rural ministry, with standards so low and requirements so meager that any pious man who has some talent as a speaker can readily find an opportunity to supply some pulpit. This is not saying there is an oversupply of ministers. There is a constant need of trained men everywhere in the country churches; but there are far too many unprepared and poorly equipped. There is doubtless a real field for lay preachers. But too many of them have received ordination with no more than a layman's training.

Financial Effect of Non-resident Preaching

The chief reason for the low salaries of rural ministers is the absentee preacher system. We speak of it as a system because it is such a wide-spread and settled custom. In many parts of the country the majority of country pastors are really not pastors but preachers only, not living on the land with their people, but in near-by villages or even far-away towns. In

Ohio only six per cent. of country churches have resident pastors, and the proportion is doubtless smaller than that in most Western and Southern states. Very many of these non-resident preachers are engaged six days in the week in other employment, as teachers, students, lawyers, insurance agents, real estate dealers, merchants, and in various other lines of business. Even though their service in the pulpit be high grade, it is usually simply Sunday work, and often covers but three or four hours altogether, so that the fee they are paid seems to the people quite adequate in payment for the service rendered and the time spent. This explains a great many low salaries. In many cases no special hardship is involved, for the minister is a tradesman or business man the rest of the week and is presumably earning a living for his family. This is a perfectly honorable thing for him to do, and we are not criticizing him. But it is poor policy for the country church to hire him as a substitute for a real pastor who lives with his people. If the church will not pay more than a one-seventh salary, however, it must be contented with one seventh of a minister's week. A great many of these absentee preachers are earnest men who would gladly give all their time to the church and community if a fair support could be assured them. Many of them have had several resident pastorates, on small salaries, but with the growing needs of their families they have been obliged to retire from the pastorate and enter some form of business. There is a constant and apparently an increasing leakage from the ranks of the ministry, year after year, of such men.

Doubtless a man's first responsibility is to his wife and children, and if the church will not give him adequate support, we cannot criticize him for giving up an impossible struggle and getting an honorable living as best he can. We see, however, in these numerous cases a serious symptom which may not be overlooked.

To be sure, a large proportion of absentee preachers with meager salaries, or rather, with the single day's wage, are ministers in charge of a circuit, dividing their time between two, three, four, or even seven churches. This circuit system has been too long established and has had too honorable a record in American church history to be lightly appreciated. A distinguished list of faithful leaders of the church might be recalled of men who have begun as "circuit-riders" and have rendered great service to the kingdom of God. Unquestionably in pioneer days the circuit system was necessary, and it is still required for a widely-scattered rural population; but in the large majority of cases where it is still found, *the circuit system seems to be serving sectarian interests rather than community welfare.* The circuit system is not a good thing for the community. It is surely better for the rural community to have one strong church, uniting the Christian forces under the leadership of a resident pastor, than it is to lack the community pastor and to have three or four little struggling preaching stations, manned once a week or twice a month by preachers who live elsewhere. Can we blame such a community if it refuses to pay more

than a pittance for such meager service? Especially unfortunate are the cases where it is evident that services are maintained at the little church at the cross-roads, not because there is any real need there, but because the contributions of the little church are needed by the denomination to eke out the salary of the minister at the village five or ten miles away who includes this church in his circuit. Thus the open country community is exploited in the interest of the village.

These facts are cited simply to explain some of the reasons for the low average salary of the rural ministry. If statistics were available, we should probably be able to prove that most ministers who are adequately trained and are devoting their full time to the work of a single church are receiving a fairly reasonable support. Such ministers and churches, however, form a very small minority in the rural church life of America, particularly in the West and South. *In general we find the situation extremely unsatisfactory both for the ministers and the churches, with really efficient service of the country communities all but impossible. The large majority of rural ministers are making a great struggle to care for their families, with inadequate support, while every year the struggle is getting more difficult, and many are giving it up as impossible.*

Is the Rural Ministry a Life Work?

This problem of financing the country church involves the question of the permanency and status of

the rural ministry. Too long it has been lightly regarded as merely a stepping-stone to the city ministry, a temporary makeshift for young ministers while they are making their first blunders and experiments in the pastorate. Some of us have come to feel that *the efficient rural ministry is a specialized ministry,* just as the city ministry should be, requiring some special fitness and specialized preparation and adaptation. *If so, it should be a ministry for life.* It would be a distinct waste to fit a man for effective rural work only to have him devote the years of his prime to the city field. Meanwhile, earnest young men who love the country and have heard the country's call are asking, "Is there a life-work for me in the rural ministry?" Some of them are making the venture of faith and propose to give their life to the rural work. For many this will be essentially home missionary work. In one of the oldest denominations in America one third of the ministers are home missionaries. Several large denominations are practically all rural. Is it not reasonable to argue that the young man considering the home mission field as a life-work should be respected as much as his brother who goes to the foreign field for life? Is it too much to expect that the church should treat the *home* missionary as well as the foreign missionary? Foreign mission boards guarantee the support of their missionaries. The stipends which they pay them are not regarded as salaries but simply as *support,* and they usually are adequate. This committee wishes to suggest the same consideration for the country minister

who enters the rural work for life. If he is a thoroughly consecrated and well-equipped man, let us treat him as well as we treat the foreign missionary. Let the church sustain him and his family. How can any denomination be self-respecting and do less?

Home and Foreign Missionary Finances Compared

And yet the fact is we are sending many of our ablest college and seminary men to the foreign field and very few of them into the country ministry for life. This is partly because there is a decent support for an educated man and his family on the foreign field, whereas the financial struggle is twice as difficult in the average country parsonage. If this condition continues indefinitely, how can we escape getting *a peasant ministry* in our own rural America inferior in every respect to the leadership of the church in foreign fields? This is a real menace which threatens us at no distant date unless organized Christendom in America unites to solve this problem of financing the country church. Interest in all phases of country life is rapidly developing. *Splendid young men in our classical colleges and our agricultural schools are anxious to go into the rural ministry for life. But they want a life chance. They must have a living wage.*

The issue of comparison between rural ministers' salaries and foreign missionaries' salaries having been raised, a few words more must be said to justify our suggestion. In raising the issue we must not be mis-

understood. We do not believe any worthy missionary is overpaid. No one can accuse any foreign missionary board of being too generous with the men and women who go into voluntary exile for Christ's sake. The most generous stipends paid by any missionary board are none too generous; but the fact remains that they are far beyond the salaries of the rural ministry. This committee has courteously been furnished full statements by the leading foreign mission boards of America as to their financial provision for their missionaries on the field. We have also ascertained the salary status in every American foreign mission board six years ago. In every instance, though differing in details, the policy is the same. *A living salary is guaranteed the missionary.* Current costs of living are carefully studied and compared, in the different fields, on the basis of which a definite sum is allowed an unmarried man or woman, a married man without children, and a man with a family, an additional allowance being provided for each child. All this is thoroughly reasonable and Christian. No church can honorably do less. It would be criminal to send more young men and women to China, Africa, or Turkey than we can support.

And yet that is exactly what we have been doing in rural America. Probably all denominations, in the eager days of church promotion in the pioneer development of our country, started far more local churches than they can adequately man with trained ministers now, and are ordaining far more men for these churches than they are able to support with a

living wage. *We have had too much church expansion at the sacrifice of ministerial efficiency.* The cost of it all is the pinching poverty in the country parsonage.

Comparisons are of course dangerous and never quite fair; but making all due allowance, let us compare the family budgets of the rural minister and the foreign missionary. The lowest foreign missionary salary we have been able to discover now paid by any strong church board to an ordained married man is $900 in a station in Africa; but in addition to this "basal salary" he is given an extra allowance for rent, free medical attendance, and a children's allowance of $100 for each child under ten and $150 for each child between ten and twenty. The *average* income of a foreign missionary is considerably above this. One prominent board reports "average total salary" in Ceylon, $1,700; other parts of India, $1,500 to $1,600; China, $1,200 to $1,600; South Africa, minimum $1,265, maximum $2,500; Japan, minimum $1,665, maximum $2,500.

Another denomination, paying very low salaries to rural pastors at home, pays its foreign missionaries as follows: In Japan, basal salary $1,400 to $1,900; Korea, $1,200; China, $1,050; North China, $1,200; Africa, $1,000. In addition to the above basal salaries, an allowance of $100 to $150 is granted for each child, according to circumstances. We realize of course the difficulty of making adequate comparisons of the costs of living in various mission fields and in America. Opinions differ as to the facts. Missionary secretaries find it difficult to strike an average in a

situation where butter costs seventy-five cents a pound but where servants can be hired for a few cents, or from a nickel to a dime per day. In treaty ports abroad, living is doubtless expensive, but elsewhere it will probably average cheaper than in America. Unquestionably the cost of living is now rising in most mission stations, and several leading foreign boards are about to raise their salary scale accordingly.

These missionary salaries are all too small when one considers the high character and ability of the men receiving them and the high cost of maintaining an American home in foreign lands; but it is a sure and steady support for the family, with old age usually provided for. One foreign board pays the missionary's wife an extra allowance of $400 to $600, and all boards pay married men more than single, which is only fair recognition of the wife's services. In the home missionary field unmarried men are not wanted at all; and, although ministers' wives are always expected to help earn the salary, who ever heard of one being paid for her services? While living abroad is expensive in the mission stations, domestic service is plentiful and very cheap, whereas the home missionary's wife can seldom afford such a luxury as any sort of servant. The foreign missionary allowance of $100 to $200 for each child is small compensation for the great tragedy of the missionary's home, the separation of the family when the children have to go home to America to be educated. But the tragedy in the rural minister's home is sometimes more serious than that. He is usually forced to live where

the schools are poor, often where there is no high school; and he has no income to educate his children away from home. Consequently he must go to another field or find other work; otherwise, as frequently happens, his children grow up with less educational advantages and a poorer start in life than their father, and so the social status of the family is lowered in the next generation. Hundreds of rural pastors are pleading for a change of pastorate so that they can provide better school privileges for their children. For this vital reason many leave the rural ministry altogether.

A Living Salary for Country Pastors

Enough has been said to show how much more considerately the great churches have provided for their foreign missionaries than they have for their home missionaries. Yet all they have done for the foreign missionary is to furnish him a living. We plead for *a living salary for the rural pastor.* This committee sent to one hundred and fifty representative men, vitally interested in rural welfare, including all the members of this Federal Council Commission on the Church and Country Life, the following question: "Should country pastors be guaranteed at least the 'minimum wage'?" (meaning of course an income on which the average American family of five can live). Only one emphatic negative was received, and that from a country minister who said, "Some of us are not worth $.85 a year." Another minister said, "I doubt it. Some get all they are worth." A large

number of replies favor the adoption of the minimum salary for pastors as a matter of simple justice, the figures suggested varying from $750 to $1,000. One conspicuously successful country minister suggests: "I am sure that no country pastor can support a family and do efficient work on less than the 'minimum wage' of $750, though I do not like to call it a wage. I think a minister's living should be on an average with his people. As that varies in different localities, it is difficult to standardize it in terms of money." A distinguished member of our Commission suggests that the minister's income should not be less than that of the local school principal or superintendent, when the two men are "of equal character, education, and experience." A similar suggestion comes from several, that the minister's salary should be on a par with that of married teachers, doctors, and other professional men in the community.

The root of the matter is tapped by this reply from a general superintendent on the Pacific coast: "*I believe in country pastors being guaranteed not less than a minimum salary, providing there may be secured in return a fixed level of efficiency.*" This touches the weak spot in the rural ministry. It cannot be denied that standards of efficiency are low and that any sort of a *guaranty,* universally applied, would be a reckless policy, unless standards of preparation and of service can be raised. It is possible for closely organized denominations to set a standard for their local churches; and likewise home missionary boards can decide upon the minimum salary they will guar-

antee their pastors. This is already done in some quarters, and where the boards can guide the selection of the men, it is just as feasible as in the case of the foreign boards. But self-supporting churches will continue to select their own pastors and determine their own salaries. They will not brook dictation, and least of all on this question of finance. The campaign that wins with them must be a campaign of education. We must prove to them that they cannot afford to run a cheap church; that efficiency demands a well-paid minister who can earn his salary; that it is easier to raise $1,000 a year for a man who is worth it than to pay $600 to a man who really earns no more. Let us advocate the simple justice of *a living wage for live ministers.* Then let us discover, through country church commissions and committees in conferences and synods, what a respectable living salary in that section must be, and suggest this as a minimum point below which the worthy minister should not be asked to live. In general the pastor should be assured at least the average living enjoyed by his people.

Yet in every instance the pastor must prove himself worthy of his support. It would be folly to take away incentive by too easily assured income. Doubtless it must remain true that an unskilled, poorly equipped minister will receive an unskilled laborer's wage. It is probably fair that a non-resident preacher should receive but one or two days' pay per week. Inefficiency or laziness must not be condoned or rewarded. But a concerted effort should be made *to safeguard the family of the worthy pastor from suffering and pov-*

erty. The difficulty involved does not excuse us from undertaking it if it is just and right. As one of our Commission suggests: "Churches receiving stated aid from mission boards may be brought to accept a better plan without difficulty. Churches which are attempting to support themselves can probably be led into it through the persuasive influence of their state organization."

Larger Salaries Make for Efficiency

When the country church honestly desires to do more than merely keep the church machinery going, it is not difficult to apply the efficiency argument. It never pays to pay less than a workman is worth, not simply because of the danger of losing him, but because he cannot do his best work. It is folly to pay less than a living wage, for it keeps body and mind below par, incapable of maximum service. If a minister is worrying over money matters and hampered by family cares and actual hardships, how can he preach vital, inspiring sermons or radiate strength and hopefulness in his parish work? Sometimes a minister, on the point of leaving a pastorate because he must have a larger income for his growing family, is kept a year longer by a salary increase of $100. It makes it possible for him to stay and to accomplish results that no other man could accomplish. In this way he reaps the results of his own faithful sowing, so that his third year is more effective than the previous two. Larger salaries make possible longer pastorates and far greater efficiency. More fundamental still is the undoubted

fact that success must be deserved, and appreciation is the reward of real service. When the country church becomes more definitely and concretely a community-serving church, it is more appreciated, and the farmers pay for what they believe in. The old-fashioned district school is bankrupt, because it does not deserve much appreciation or support. The new country school, which really educates the children for rural life, is winning more liberal support because it is appreciated. It is surely true that a useful church does not die, and the more it helps the community the more easily the money is raised for its maintenance. We need more demonstration churches, centers of community service and usefulness, to prove that our problem is usually solved *when the church and the minister make themselves indispensable to the community.*

Questions of Business Method

It seems to be true very generally that much needless financial weakness of rural churches is due to poor business methods. Just as church federations in our cities are helping to standardize the business methods of the city churches, it ought to be possible without serious difficulty to educate financial boards of the country churches in approved methods of church financing. Many country churches are already as systematically financed as any in the city; but in general the weaker the church the more hopeless the system. The " short-haul on the pocketbook " is the customary policy, usually by way of the subscription paper. The annual budget system, the every member canvas, some

regular and adequate system of income, such as continuous or annual pledges, with definite and regular payments, a simple system of accounting, regular auditing, and public reports, will go far toward toning up not only the finances but also the spiritual life of the church, as the two are so vitally connected. The science and art of church financing is something which can and should be taught. Many churches do not seem able to discover it without help. A traveling auditor or financial expert representing the state office of the denomination could render great assistance. This service is being done quite generally already by district superintendents and state officials in some denominations; but regular auditing or anything savoring of outside supervision would be delicate business in many of our independent churches.

More Vital Rural Religion

In all this consideration of ways and means the primary fact will not be lost sight of, that the fundamental difficulty is not one of method but of life itself. The country church needs its religion vitalized and made more unselfish. The great motives underneath the life of the church and its activities must be taught and emphasized. The whole level of this subject of church finances must be raised. It must be rescued from its sordidness and selfishness and be spiritualized. The doctrine of Christian trusteeship must be accepted by Christian people. Not merely self-denial but the joy of sacrifice should be the key-note. People should be reminded that money given for the support of a

real community-serving church is never charity, but simply investment, for the benefit of the giver himself and his own community. Money given for a useless or unnecessary church is neither investment nor charity but money thrown away. There is no use denying the fact that thousands of country churches are quite unnecessary, because the community was amply provided with churches before these churches ever came. Money for such institutions is either a dead waste or an unjustifiable luxury. Yet vast sums are being wasted in supporting such needless enterprises. Rural business men have a right to refuse to support such churches and to focus their support on such churches as are actually efficient in community service.

In a representative assembly like this, holding such diverse views on church polity, it would be remarkable if any report on financial policy could be wholly satisfactory. We cannot help feeling, however, that the problem is such a serious one, involving so deeply the welfare of the country churches everywhere, that it would be a great gain if this body with its far-reaching power of moral suasion could go on record as advocating a strong financial policy for increased church efficiency.

Your Committee, therefore, in the light of the foregoing discussion, beg leave to offer the following suggestions, as

A Financial Policy for the Country Church

1. The welfare of every country community demands a prosperous and efficient church at the heart

of the community life. It deserves support in proportion to its usefulness. Such support is not charity, but investment in the community's welfare.

2. If the church is needed in the community, a worthy church building should be provided, suitable for purposes of worship and religious education, and equipped with social rooms which can be made broadly useful to the community, as a center of joyous social life for young and old. A one-room church is usually a poor enterprise.

3. The church or its board of trustees should be legally incorporated. For trustees or financial committee only men of integrity, tested business ability, and willingness to work should be selected. Upon their skill and faithfulness the prosperity of the church will largely depend. They should take pride in its success and should determine to make it "a going concern."

4. A selfish church is a failure and a cheap church never pays. If religion is worth having, it is worth paying for, and on a generous basis. For the sake of saving the boys and girls and giving the young people a wholesome social life and making the community a safe place for a home, the church is worth while. For Christ's sake and the sake of humanity the church stands and serves, with faith in God and immortality. It should be made worthy of the loyalty and whole-hearted support of the country people, on a self-respecting basis.

5. A better paid ministry makes for efficiency. It is easier for most churches to raise $1,200 for a man

who really earns it than to pay $700 to an inferior man; and that difference in salary makes possible a better educated pastor, a longer pastorate, with more permanent results. A live minister deserves a living salary. It should at least give him as adequate a living for his family as the average cultured home in the community enjoys.

6. One local pastor living with his people is worth more to the community than three preachers whose homes are elsewhere. The community needs preaching, but it must have life-sharing. It can afford to sacrifice much to unite its Christian forces and maintain one strong church with a well-paid pastor, paying for the whole time of a live man who shall be a community leader, not a visitor.

7. Country churches should adopt a businesslike system of finance. An annual budget should be carefully prepared in advance and an "every member canvass" be made to meet it. The pledge system with weekly or monthly payments furnishes a regular basis for church support which is steadier and usually more generous than the subscription paper. Paid suppers and entertainments for revenue, though valuable in moderation and for social purposes, are poor dependence for church support. Direct giving is always the cheapest policy.

8. To keep church finances steadily efficient publicity is desirable, with regular quarterly reports to the people, and annual reports to the presbytery or district association. Regular auditing, quarterly or annually, by church authorities at state headquarters, furnishes

a wholesome incentive and helps the local officials to keep abreast of the most recent methods of successful church work.

9. The spiritual welfare of a church is closely related to its financial self-respect, and its vital religion will grow with its generosity. Even the weaker churches should have some share in the world-wide work of missions and should strive to meet their apportionment, adopting it definitely as a part of their regular budget.

10. If the resources of the community warrant it, every church should speedily grow to self-support. If the help of a home mission board is continuously necessary, it may suggest that the church itself is not needed in a community that will not support it. Perhaps for the glory of God and the welfare of the community it should unite with a neighboring church. In case of actual poverty in the community the problem of developing local resources should be vigorously studied, as the basis of future prosperity and community self-respect.

Continuation Work Suggested

Your Committee feel that they have been able to do little more than study the causes of financial weakness in the country churches and discuss business aims and standards of efficiency. There is much continuation work which should be done. We would suggest that the following lines of investigation be pursued the coming year:

1. To gather further data as to the possibilities of

a life service for fully trained men in the country ministry with the idea that such a ministry may be made a specialized field of Christian leadership with adequate support for a growing family.

2. To study the cost of living in different rural sections of the country for the purpose of determining the actual living salary required for an average family of five.

3. To correspond with church extension boards and home missionary societies of various denominations, to discover their basis of assisting rural churches, their policy of cooperation with other boards, and the basis on which their aid is withheld; also to gather data concerning the effect of this home mission policy upon the rural communities involved.

4. To discover to what extent denominations and home mission boards have already standardized rural ministers' salaries and on what basis; also to find out what efficiency tests are exacted of ministers to justify the guaranty of the living salary.

5. To collect and standardize the financial suggestions of the rural church commissions of the various denominations and to report the most successful plans of country church financing.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH IN THE SOUTH

W. H. Mills

It is a message of good cheer that I bring to this Conference from the far South.

The country church in the South has suffered as elsewhere from the exodus to the town and city. It suffers to-day all the evils of absentee landlordism and one year tenantry in most aggravated form. It is "troubled and perplexed on every side," but it is "not in despair"; it is "cast down, but not destroyed."

The country church in the South begins to realize that new conditions demand new methods. It is endeavoring to prove all things that it may hold fast that which is good.

The oldest theological seminary in the South Atlantic States is the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina. It may properly be regarded as ultra-conservative in many respects, yet it has introduced courses in sociology. Its students have already been addressed this year by the State Commissioner of Agriculture. A series of lectures are planned on such subjects as "The View-point of the Illiterate White Man," and I myself have been invited to give five lectures there on "The Country Church," early next year. Ten years ago such courses and lectures were quite impossible at this seminary.

The Atlantic Theological Seminary [1] has also given

[1] Of the Congregational Church.

me the privilege of addressing its students on the same subject at a conference to be held there in the same month. I believe it may be truly said that every theological seminary in the South is responding to the feeling abroad in the whole church, which demands investigation into the underlying causes of present conditions, and which culminates in just such conferences as this, but upon a smaller scale.

The agricultural colleges and state universities are also feeling and answering this demand. Clemson Agricultural College, the State Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina, was the first, so far as I know, in the South to enter actively and systematically upon the assistance of the country church by every means in its power. It held a conference on the country church some years ago, to which it invited all the ministers living in the adjacent counties, and entertained them free of all expense. Last summer, in connection with its summer school, it arranged a ten days' course for country ministers, and obtained from the State Bankers' Association the promise to pay the railroad fare of all rural ministers who should attend. It may not be amiss to say just here that this course was successful beyond our expectations. The ministers who came went home saying that they had been greatly profited, that they would try to return for the next summer school, and that they would be "boosters" for it during the whole year.

Clemson College has a mailing list of all the ministers in the state. It has sent to them letters begging their assistance in the form of prayers at farmers'

institutes, and asking them to further the planting of grain in the fall, and to aid in the diversifying of crops. Thus the college has suggested to every minister the wisdom and propriety of his taking an active part in all that makes for the agricultural development of his community.

The college is now considering the possibility of adding a minister to its Extension Division, to have charge of its country church work, to do just such work for South Carolina as Messrs. Gill and Pinchot have performed for New York and Vermont. Just as the thoughtful farmer turns more and more to the agricultural college, so the country minister is beginning to find that the agricultural college can help him, and indeed is anxious to make him more efficient. The greatest ally of the country minister is the state agricultural college, and here and there our ministers are beginning to appreciate its ready and tremendous assistance.

The church organizations are waking up to the new demands. The General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church has officially declared that the Assembly of 1916 shall be known as the "Country Church Assembly," and has appointed a committee to prepare a suitable program. Piedmont Presbytery in South Carolina a year ago took similar action. Anderson District Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church has committed itself to a like course; and here and there a church has carried out the plan. Augusta Presbytery in Georgia took like action with respect to immigration.

I am free to say that just now I am concerned, not so much with the practical results of these steps as with the spirit in which they were conceived. I rejoice heartily in this new spirit. I think it is the spirit of Christ; and from such a spirit results are sure which will make the South more and more a part of the kingdom of God.

The local churches in all the denominations are endeavoring more than ever before to be community servants. I assure my hearers that the church in the South is not behind the times. Of course there are many churches—perhaps still a large majority—that would have all things continue as they were in the old days, when the fathers fell asleep. But the leaven of the new spirit of community service is at work. God grant that it may spread until the whole church shall be leavened.

Let me give a few illustrations. Carmel Church, in Pickens County, is the oldest Presbyterian Church in upper South Carolina. It had suffered the loss of all things, almost, except its building and its cemetery. This year it is taking on new life—because it has sought to advance both the social and the agricultural development of the people by the cultivation of a church farm. The largest Presbyterian Church in the country in South Carolina is Bethel, and here a few years ago was organized an Improvement Association, whose members agreed to invite new people into their community and sell them good land on reasonable terms.

Steel Creek Church, near Charlotte, North Carolina,

is the largest country church in the Southern General Assembly. It has maintained itself and grown largely because of the fact that when a young man of that community wants to get a home, it has been for years the custom of the officers of that church to help him to acquire it. The pull of the town can be overcome when church officers stand ready to back worthy young men in their efforts toward home-ownership, not simply on business principles but for the sake of both the man and the church.

I must hasten on to tell of the efforts ministers are making to be, in a new sense, the servants of all. I know a minister of the Congregational Church who has had in his churches in northern Georgia a series of church and country life institutes; another in South Carolina planned a picnic for the whole community on the church grounds, and the speakers came from the agricultural college. I helped, in August, 1915, in a meeting of this sort. In the morning at eleven there was preaching, after which dinner was served on the grounds. In the afternoon one day we had a dairy demonstration; on the next afternoon we had a poultry demonstration; and on the third afternoon an orchard demonstration, with the introduction of the country farm demonstration agent to the people of the community. On two nights we had lectures with lantern slides on community building. We held all the meetings in the church itself, and I have met no one who thought that we ran the risk of committing sacrilege.

This is the new idea that is seizing the mind of the church in the South,—that the local church has the

right to live only as it spends its life in community service. Some of us in the South believe that, if a church in the country does not serve its whole community by making better farmers as well as making the farmers better, it ought to die. We believe the church has a very definite word to speak on the tenant system and landlordism, as well as on prohibition and "worldly amusements." We have come to believe that the second great commandment needs to be so put into practice by the church that rich man and poor man, white man and black man, shall each have equal opportunity to work and live safely under his own vine and fig-tree.

Finally, I beg to assure you that "away down South in Dixie" we have no new gospel. Our preaching is still the preaching of the cross, our appeal is still to the individual man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, both himself and his house. But we do ask with intensest desire that along with this evangelistic appeal the church shall seek the physical and mental and spiritual welfare of the whole community, that it may present it in soundness and wholeness before the throne of God. So only shall the church be animated by the spirit of the Master who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE RURAL COMMUNITY

Harry F. Ward

I am afraid that I cannot follow the last speaker with an equally glowing account of rural church progress in this section. I know of a country church not fifty miles from here where the preacher put in a course of lectures by experts on better farming. On the first night he found that the sexton had left the church locked and dark, and he was forced to break a window to get in. On the second night of the course the sexton met him at the door and threw the keys in his face, telling him that if the church was to go to the devil by discussing such subjects he would have no part in the iniquity.

It is my misfortune that I have been prevented by other duties from attending all the sessions of this Conference, but it is apparent even to a casual observer that this Conference is committed to the proposition that the church can only find itself through its ministry to the life of the community. Theological seminaries used to teach that the church was a place where the gospel was preached and the sacraments administered. In many rural communities it is still considered solely as a place of worship. Sometimes even that is not an ideal. A year or two ago I met a young preacher who had gone to a rural church just after its congregation had adopted plans for a new building. He found inadequate provision for the

Sunday-school, the primary room being in the darkest, dampest corner of the basement. He urged a change of plans and was told, " Young man, in our old church we could never conduct a funeral properly; there was no room to turn the casket around and we always had to back it out. Now we have got a plan that lets us take the casket out properly, and we are not going to change it for anything or anybody." So they built the church for the dead and let the living go.

The term social justice is a vague and mouth-filling term. It needs just now to be made concrete. The preaching of the God of righteousness has developed a certain amount of justice between individuals. It must now develop justice between the various groups that compose the community life; between producers, middlemen, and consumers; between the groups engaged in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, transportation, mining, and personal service in the professions. There must be no handicaps of special privilege for one group involving disabilities for another. When the prophets found the growing merchant class in Israel encroaching upon the men of the countryside, they thundered the wrath of God against them. They might pile high their gifts upon the altar, but Jehovah's word was " Though you make many prayers, I will not hear you. Though you stretch forth your hands all the day long, I will turn away mine eyes from you." Why? Because the price of the very gifts upon the altar was the depleted lives of the men of the soil whose little landholdings had been taken away under cover of the law,—duly signed, sealed, and sanc-

tioned, but nevertheless against the righteousness of Jehovah,—to swell the great estates of the rich merchants. While this continued, God did not desire temple worship; what he wanted was that justice should flow through the land as a mighty stream and fall down as water. In the same spirit did Jesus confront the monopolists of the temple courts. To his flaming words he added the strength of his good right arm, denying those who secured special privilege to tax the religious necessities of the common people any place or part in the house of God. So to-day must the preachers of the gospel thunder against any group in the community which seeks or secures the privilege to profit at the expense of other groups or of the whole community.

Social justice is perhaps easiest understood in connection with child life. Whatever else it may mean it can mean no less than this—that all children must have equal access to the things necessary for their development. If one group of children have a better chance than another for health, education, moral protection, and religious development, this is fundamental social injustice. Social justice demands that the children of one group in the population shall have as good a chance as the children of another to develop the life more abundant that is the Christian ideal. A Persian proverb declares that when an injured child cries in the dark the throne of God rocks from side to side. If any state lets that cry go unheard and unanswered, the government of that state will soon begin to shake to its foundations.

The weight of social injustice that presses upon the children of a certain section of the industrial wage-earners is easy to be felt. The bitter cry of these children has been coming up from below until it has reached the ear of the church. These children live in bad air, amid poor surroundings; they are undernourished and compelled to leave school when half educated. Upon their enfeebled lives the organized vices of the city mass their attack. It is obvious that social justice demands that this group of children be emancipated. The same need exists for a smaller group of children in rural communities. There child life is not so much destroyed by frontal attacks as it is wasted through lack of development. In the countryside there are often undernourishment and unsanitary conditions, improper child labor, and the denial of education and recreation. The fact that in the country these conditions are more largely due than in the city to the ignorance and greed of parents does not lessen the social injustice from which the children suffer. The program of social welfare which seeks to give equal opportunity to all child life must be carried into the rural districts.

Present tendencies in rural America are rapidly increasing the pressure of economic conditions upon a section of its child life. Two new groups are growing in the rural population of this country—landlords and tenants. So rapidly do they grow that some students insist that we are heading straight toward the farming of large tracts of land intensively by concentrated capital, with hired men doing the work.

Passing through Iowa the other day, I picked up a paper and found a statement by an agricultural authority estimating that one half the population of Iowa was composed of either tenant farmers or hired men. The children of the tenant farmers have not an equal chance for development with those of the landlords. Even where their educational privileges are the same, they are not as well able to take advantage of them. I was recently in a rural community where the retired farmers were objecting strenuously to paying the tax required to make the rural school efficient, a school which was to serve, not their children, but the children of their tenants and hired men. One man even proposed that this latter group should not be permitted to vote on school questions.

The continuance of the handicap upon the development of child life involved in the increase of tenant and wage farming means that the rural communities will cease to supply men of strength to the national life. It is the free men of the soil who have always fought for progress. They largely secured the liberties of England. They were the men who drove their wagons for two or three days to hear Lincoln and Douglas debate slavery. They were the men who saw the war through to the end. When you take out of the national life the free men of the soil, you have taken out the most of its backbone.

It is not likely, however, that in the atmosphere of democracy in this land we shall develop a subservient, pauperized peasant group such as exists in England, offering a background for My Lady Bountiful of the

manor hall. What is more likely to develop is a rebellious group of agricultural workers and the growth of class hatred in the rural sections even as it now exists in some quarters in industry. With the Industrial Workers of the World organizing the seasonal agricultural workers, and farm owners becoming absentee capitalists, it looks as though the conflict that is developing in this country between those who receive income merely from ownership of property and those who receive it from service rendered would gather strength in the rural districts. Already in some agricultural regions the attitude of the farmer in the conflict between property income and service income, his attitude toward the seasonal workers that aid in gathering the harvest, is that unsympathetic and inhuman attitude which is held by some captains of industry. Some recent brutal incidents in the labor conflict have occurred in rural sections. The increase of class hatred and strife in rural America is inevitable unless religion can stem the tide by securing social justice.

Social injustice roots in economic inequality, and the beginnings of economic inequality are in unequal opportunity for the ownership of the land. The question of social justice in the rural community is the land question, which is older than civilization. Our religion never dodged it. From the day of the Hebrew lawgivers it has developed a body of teaching designed to secure justice in land ownership and use. The fundamental task for religion to-day in the rural community is to develop a body of teaching adapted to

the present situation. If it fails here no program of social welfare can be carried through. The basis of religious teaching on this question must be the old Hebrew word that "the earth is the Lord's" (not the landlord's). The corollary of this is that it is to be used for the good of all the people, that it is a community inheritance in which all the people of the community have a share. Another corollary is that the title to individual control and use of the land must rest only on the basis of service rendered to the community. If it can develop a body of religious teaching on the land question, the country church will become not a local but a world-wide force. It will reach out and touch the whole issue of the relation of the people to the natural resources upon which all industry depends. It will reach out still further and touch the whole world life. For the possibility of ordering the life of the world in security and in peace depends upon the recognition of the fact that in the economy of God there are no superior races or nations even as there are no superior classes; upon the willingness to work out a world-wide plan of social justice based upon the rights of all the children of men the world over to the earth and its resources as the common inheritance.

THE CRISIS OF ORGANIZED CHRISTIANITY

Fred B. Smith

That man must be dull indeed who fails to observe the peril which confronts the organized forces of the Christian religion in this generation. So acute has this become that many of the ablest students of religion are prophesying the utter collapse of the present order unless some very prompt readjustments are made in the present system. This is not an indictment of Christianity as a truth or doctrine. The precepts of Jesus Christ were never so radiant with supreme effectiveness and practicability as now. Jew and Gentile, Occidental and Oriental, are alike turning to the unequaled Beatitudes as the only hope for the present world chaos. But where is there an organization equal to the hour in the adequate application of these ideals? is the paramount question. There has never been such a solemn hour in the world's history as the present one. Can the human family survive in concord under the strain of modern methods, which have eliminated time and space and brought into striking reach the frictions of classes, races, and nations that two decades ago were remote enough to make momentary outbreaks impossible? is the question uppermost in the minds of thinking men.

A world reduced to a neighborhood demands a common religion, and a common religion it is to have very rapidly. If Christianity is to be the faith, its leaders have no time to lose in meeting one funda-

mental requirement, namely, *to present a United Christian Organization.* We have to learn at once to move the Christian forces of the world as a compact unit upon the new tasks or be content to accept defeat at the end of the road. Segregated sectarianism will not win the Christian conquest of the twentieth century. *Every modern problem before the church demands unity in effort.*

The present war, worse than all the other combined wars of the world's history, is a fruit of divided Christianity. There was in the world Christian sentiment enough, if it had had a method which could have brought its full impact to bear upon the contending nations, absolutely to prevent this outbreak; and if the old order is to be continued, the same upheaval will occur again, earlier or later. Not politicians, nor kings, emperors, or other rulers, but a united voice of the believers in the gospel of Jesus Christ will some day fix the standards of world's peace, and this alone is sufficient to demand a united church. The extension of the gospel to the non-Christian world has been piteously slow in the past, but will be more hideously retarded in the future unless a united Christianity is called into action.

Every world issue is crying for combined effort in the name of Jesus Christ. Not less insistent are the demands within our own shores. The refreshing streams of our life—economic, social, political, and moral—have from times immemorial flowed from the countryside and the open field. The church ought to be strongest in the rural places where the genesis of

things is to be found. It is proverbially and horribly weakest there.

The cold denominational attempt at this problem has proved a flat, ridiculous failure. The hope of any kind of success in solving it may be grounded only in a united Christianity.

The task of proper, forceful, continuous religious education is left undone up to this date. We have been depending upon a thirty-minute period per week in the Sunday-school for a few children, a smattering in the home for a yet smaller company, the pulpit for another group, and an annual spell of hysterical revival for the least number, as means for teaching the truths of God. For the mass they have failed. The universities of every kind, the public and private schools alike, are awake and open-minded to this need. A united Christianity can enter this door and meet the need. "Fifty-seven different varieties" will be repudiated.

The civic problems, the law enforcement issue, the child life program, and, indeed, every vital, burning, compelling call to Christianity are of such a nature that the hope of their successful handling is vain unless there is grace and genius enough in the church to evolve a plan by which the forces can move as a unit with an eye single only to the kingdom of God.

CHURCH FEDERATION AND COOPERATION

(Report of Committee)

E. Tallmadge Root, *Chairman,* Henry A. Atkinson, Lemuel Call Barnes, Anna B. Taft, George Frederick Wells.

Analysis

Federation includes:

I. Federation of all Betterment Agencies.
II. Church Federation, embracing
  1. Federation of Churches.
  2. Federated Circuits.
  3. Community Churches.
    (1) Federated Churches.
    (2) Denominational Churches.
    (3) Union Independent Churches.

1. *Cooperation* is a general term, and federation is used in so many senses that our first step must be to distinguish and define.

2. *Federation* is used in a broad sense, including all institutions, civil or voluntary, interested in rural betterment; for example, The New England Federation for Rural Progress, and similar organizations in states, counties, or townships. In these, the churches may and should have a part, by direct representation in townships and through their own Federations in the larger territories. There is a gratifying recognition, on the part of betterment movements, of the fact that all social problems are, in ultimate analysis, moral,

and therefore insoluble without the aid of the institutions of religion, which alone can bring adequate motives. This gives the church to-day an opportunity unsurpassed in history. With the proper attitude, as R. Fulton Cutting has shown in his *Church and Society,* they may even cooperate with, and use, the "institutions of the democratic state."

3. "*Federation,*" again, is applied to organizations composed of churches only. The term "*Church Federation*" should be strictly limited to organizations in which churches, or their denominational conferences, are represented by official action: no body of individuals or non-ecclesiastical societies should receive the title. Following the analogy of our Federal Government, *Church Federation* attempts to combine the maximum unity of action with the complete independence of the constituent bodies, denominational or local. It implies no endorsement of others' doctrine, policy, or ritual, and no compromise of one's own. Relying on practical motives, it seeks a *pragmatic* unity. It thus meets the obvious necessity that in every community, commonwealth, and nation, the churches shall, to the maximum extent possible, act unitedly in the face of the pressing religious and social tasks. There is no place where such united action is more needed and promising than in the rural township.

4. But here again, various types and methods must be distinguished. The end,—combined action of all Christians,—may and must be attained in varying ways according to the conditions of the community.

5. In a township where the population requires, and financial resources can support, more than one church and pastor, that end is to be secured by a local *Federation of Churches;* that is, a joint committee of pastors and delegates, officially appointed by the several churches, to learn and meet all needs, religious or social, which require cooperation or concerted action. The simpler problems and closer acquaintance of its churches give the rural township advantage over the city, and experience has already proved that, in proportion to expenditure of time and money, township federations accomplish the largest results of any. Every rural town with more than one church ought to have such an organization.

6. In a township where population and resources are inadequate to support more than one pastor, but where the population is so distributed that more than one place of worship and organized church is necessary, such a joint committee should be organized and a *common* pastor employed. This may be called a *Federated Circuit.* Similar circuits are common in some denominations. Interdenominational circuits have been arranged in some states. But wherever possible, they should follow civil boundaries so as to secure the obvious advantage of a resident township pastor. (In all types, it will be noted, we assume that organizations shall strictly follow civil divisions.)

7. What population justifies fully-equipped separate churches? Here the standard obviously needs to be raised. The limit set by one state federation, three hundred and thirty-three to a church, is obviously

too low. With all the growing demands of missions and social service, the churches are not justified in asking a trained man to devote his life to less than one thousand souls, except where the population of an entire township is less; or to live on a salary of less than $1,000 anywhere.

8. In communities whose compactness permits, and whose population and resources require, that there be only one congregation and pastor, but where several churches actually exist and are not ready to unite as one denominational church, a *Federated Church* may and should be formed. *Like* a *Federation,* this type preserves intact the legal existence and denominational connection of the churches, while securing united action through a joint committee. It differs from the Federation in that this united action includes, as its first and main object, worship as one congregation and the support of one pastor. Complex as a Federated Church seems, experience demonstrates that it works harmoniously and secures marked increase of efficiency over the field. It may prepare for full union as a church of one or the other denomination; but it may also be a permanent solution. The limitations of trust funds often make it the only solution. Denominations which differ widely in forms of worship, while they heartily cooperate in a *Federation of Churches,* may not be able to unite in a *Federated Church.*

9. As implied in the last paragraph, where a new church is being formed, or where existing churches can agree to unite organically, one church may and should be formed. This is obviously the simplest and

the best solution. Such a community church may either be *denominational* or *undenominational.* If it is possible to agree upon a denomination, the former is undoubtedly the better, as giving the church the missionary outlet counsel, and perhaps aid which it requires. Denominations are the most effective agencies yet existing to advance the kingdom of God. Success depends upon such an understanding between the denominations of the state that the one holding the field shall make it an acceptable church-home to every one who is a true Christian, and other denominations shall advise their adherents there to identify themselves with it at least as "associate members"; that is, members retaining ecclesiastical connection elsewhere.

10. The *union* or undenominational church is necessarily independent. It suffers from lack of denominational aid and counsel. It may, however, readily share in missions through denominational or interdenominational boards; and secure fellowship, counsel, and perhaps even aid ultimately, through the state Federation of Churches. Even with their present isolation many union churches are successful, as appears from the fact that from 1890 to 1906 independent churches which include union churches, increased in the United States five hundred and ninety-six per cent., while the number of Protestant Churches as a whole increased only twenty-seven per cent.

11. Of course the single church of either type is not an example of *Federation* in the technical sense; but its success evidently requires the spirit of inter-

denominational *cooperation;* and therefore comes within the topic assigned to your committee.

Minority Report

The Rev. George Frederick Wells dissents from paragraph 8, saying: "A one-minister federation (Federated Church) is justifiable only when some form of organic union has become the settled purpose of the federation and the minister is secured expressly to help attain that end."

He would change paragraph 7 into "a guarded statement of the great importance of the question of numerical size of parish," and holds that paragraph 10 leans too much to the side of the independent church.

COOPERATION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

W. G. Clippinger

It may not be amiss for me at the outset to state frankly and yet with the fullest sympathy a fear which I entertain with regard to the emphasis of meetings such as this. We have shared very enthusiastically the new spirit of awakened interest in social service, and the call of the country is so strong and loud that its appeals have stirred our hearts with a great deal of enthusiasm. This meeting is significant for its degree of interest in the federation of churches and par-

ticularly in the interest in country life. The inspiration is running high, and what I am about to say must not be interpreted as being a criticism from one who is outside the circle of friends of the movement. I share with you heartily in the enthusiasm of the hour, but at the same time I claim the right to be a friendly critic and reserve the privilege of pointing out some of the possible dangers of an overemphasis upon one phase of the problem, or rather non-emphasis of another and vital phase of the problem. It is said that a man's worst enemies are they of his own household. I should like to say that a man's best friends are they of his own household, and further that a man's safest and sanest critics are they of his own household.

In the matter of federation, as it pertains to both the city and the country problem, it seems to me that one important thing has been overlooked—that of the federation in things which are essentially religious in their bearings. This must not be interpreted as criticism of the splendid emphasis upon methods in social service and expressive activity. The one thing which this program and most of our programs have overlooked has been that of deliberation upon the special problem of religious education. It is to this problem that my topic commits us for consideration at this moment.

That I may set before you more clearly what I mean I may be permitted to quote a text. It is a rather long one, but expresses better than I could my conception of our strength and our weakness. I refer to that part of Dr. Francis G. Peabody's address before the

Religious Education Association some years ago, entitled "The Social Conscience and the Religious Life." The following is my text:

"Religious education, it may be said, deals with the child, the individual, the church; social duty deals with the community, the industrial order, the state. Religious education leads to a better knowledge of God; social duty leads to a better service of man.

"The two enterprises stand near together, but they face, as it were, opposite ways. Religious education looks toward the eternal; social duty looks toward the contemporary. It is not, then, a questionable use of our opportunity, not to say a perversion of our trust, if even for a single session an organization pledged to religious education should be invited to consider the perplexing problems of social duty, which so gravely divide and distract the thought of the modern world. The hesitation which may be thus expressed concerning our immediate purpose reflects a much more general skepticism which many religious people frankly confess. The absorbing interest of the present age in social duty, its desire for social service, and its dream of social revolution have been, it is admitted, a summons to the Christian church, as to the modern world, to new forms of duty; but have they not, it is asked, diverted the church from its original and permanent purpose of redeeming and sanctifying the individual soul? Is not the church tempted to diminish its devotion to worship and to apply its energies to work? Are we not substituting clubs, gymnasiums, and social settlements for prayers, conversions, and revivals? Is

not the church in our day less frequented than the parish house, and the preacher drawn to a gospel of social reform rather than to a gospel of salvation? And where, if anywhere, shall we escape from this peril of secularized and truncated Christianity if not in an assembly expressly devoted to religious education? Shall not the clamorous demands of social duty be, for the moment, hushed while the soul of man listens for the instruction of God?

"Much there is, no doubt, in the temper of the present time which justifies in devout people this sense of apprehension. The awakening of the social conscience has been so abrupt and startling, and the reaction from an individualized and self-centered religion so marked and compelling, that the church as a religious shrine may be easily supplanted by the church as a social laboratory; and the practice of the presence of God may be forgotten in the practice of the service of man. The tremendous force of the social renaissance sweeps Christian teachers into restatements of Christian doctrine which identify a social program with the essentials of a Christian faith.

"Where, it may be asked, is the place for personal piety among these pressing demands of social service? Are the economists, sociologists, philanthropists, or revolutionists to represent all that is left of Christian faith? Is the Christian church to teach an industrial revolution instead of a spiritual evolution? Are we to be so busy in doing good that we have no time to be good? Is the old-time issue between faith and works to be revived, and must another Paul preach

again the vanity of unspiritualized conduct, and the power of the risen life? The situation is certainly not without gravity, when many circumstances of the time conspire to transform the Christian church into a charity-bureau, or a lecture-platform, or a recreation-ground, or a medical clinic."

There are three existing agencies for religious instruction in most communities, the Sunday-school, the Christian Endeavor Society, and the home. Of these the most important is the home, which is at the same time the most neglected. The most effective in its organization is the Sunday-school. There is no community where it has not gone; no hamlet it has not reached. The home, which is the primitive and natural agency for religious instruction, has surrendered its right to instruct in things religious to an artificial organization known as the Sunday-school. Here under varying and often unfavorable conditions our children receive most of the religious inspiration and training they will get.

The Christian Endeavor Society and other young people's organizations are designed more for training than for instruction and yet may have a share in giving and receiving the inspiration to be derived from co-operative and federated movements.

The chief agency for religious education in the rural communities, then, is the Sunday-school. The Sunday-school has likewise been the most effective agency in producing federation and cooperation among the churches. Indeed an anomalous situation presents itself in this, that whole congregations will mingle in

an interdenominational Sunday-school convention, subscribe to plans, purposes, ideals, and methods, and even to fundamental doctrines in religion, but refuse to come together on other occasions and in other circumstances. At the same time it must be admitted that much of the bigotry and narrowness of sectarianism is being dissipated through the organized Sunday-school work. The World's Sunday-School Association represents an organization of the leading Christian denominations in this and foreign lands. It has succeeded in pressing itself into pagan countries. Frequently the Sunday-school has been the pioneer in missionary activity. The same spirit of comity and cooperation is prevalent in all communities in the home land. It is the finest democratizing and socializing agency known in religious circles. There is about it a freedom and an ease unknown in other organizations.

The remarkable effect of the international uniform lesson system has been to unify the sentiment of a score or more of Christian denominations. The consciousness that at the same time, under the same conditions and by the same system twenty to thirty millions of people are studying the same Biblical material in a uniform lesson is the finest illustration of cooperation and federation the world has yet seen. Although the graded system is supplanting the uniform system, the results and the spirit remain, and the religious world will forever be the heir of this rich heritage of fraternal spirit.

The Sunday-school has not only contributed to this spirit of federation and cooperation, but it is also

receiving and sharing in the new spirit which the movement represented by this organization is producing. The Sunday-school has given and received much of inspiration and is becoming the center of a new spirit of unselfish devotion to the cause of religion. It has become the most popular and socializing organization. It is the easiest and cheapest medium through which cooperation and federation may be effected.

At the same time it has failed to accomplish much that lies within its province. Its degree of federation has been secured chiefly through conventions, institutes, and conferences. These have extended from the world's organization down through the international, state, district, county, and township divisions. It has failed, however, of projecting the spirit of federation into its practical operations for the benefit of its own work. It has created a spirit, but has not in full measure produced tangible results. To be specific, the same condition that is notorious with regard to the church as a whole affects particularly the Sunday-school operation. This is to be seen (1) in the inefficiency of its teaching force when confined to denominational lines, and (2) in the lack of efficient material equipment.

The fact that so few efficiently trained teachers are available for the average rural Sunday-school has become a matter of great concern to the religious forces of the country. The classes, if pedagogically arranged, are necessarily small and the number of teachers relatively large. Moreover, by the very nature of the case, not many qualified teachers can be secured

from numbers so small as the average rural congregation. Much of the ignorance of Biblical facts, to say nothing of the failure to vitalize religious truth, is doubtless due to the inefficient methods of our instruction. Trained leadership coupled with a universal and popular conviction that religious instruction is not only desirable but necessary for the welfare of the individual and of society will help to solve the problem.

Now let me say a word with regard to the method of cooperation and federation in religious education. There are three distinct media of cooperation possible in rural districts: first, the community training school; second, the federated Sunday-school; and third, the correlation of Sunday-school and day-school in religious instruction. There might be also added a fourth —cooperation for religious instruction in the home, which of course would be more difficult of execution.

In city communities a new movement is now being promoted for interdenominational community training-schools in which are employed a half dozen experts drawn from all denominations, sometimes imported from other communities, carrying on through a series of months a systematic course of instruction and training for both teachers and officers. In this day of quick transit by automobiles, of easy communication by telephone, and of other socializing agencies, it is indeed possible for a community training-school including a half dozen parishes to be carried on in the winter as easily as the old-fashioned spelling-bee or debating society. Let the work in the Bible be conducted by the minister who is best trained to teach

the Bible. Let the work in psychology be carried on by the best school-teacher or superintendent in the community. Let the topic of administration be taught by the best Sunday-school superintendent. Still further specialization could be made if necessary. Illustrations of the splendid way in which this is done in the cities are shown in Oak Park, Chicago; Dayton; Cincinnati; Cleveland; and other cities.

On the second point, the matter of equipment, it may be said that it is hardly fair to this generation of young people that centralized school-buildings with modern heating, lighting, and ventilating systems and comfortable seating should be provided for the day-schools, while the leaders of religious work are unwilling to provide similar conditions for the Sunday-school. This would probably call for centralization of religious education. It would require the laying down of denominational lines and the establishment of a new spirit of federation and cooperation of the churches. Nevertheless, the greatest advertisement the Christian religion could ever have would be the announcement of a centralized Sunday-school conducted by trained experts, with Sunday-school wagons to bring the children from neighboring districts in numbers sufficient to create enthusiasm and inspiration in the work of teaching. One reason that so few young people go to Sunday-school in the rural districts is that the numbers in the average church are not sufficient to awaken interest. The churches are cold and poorly lighted and ventilated. The music is dull and uninspiring. The numbers in his own group

do not inspire and awaken social sympathy on the part of the pupil. The teacher feels that because the class is small there is little need of special preparation. The consequence is that the interest in religious education and, of course, in religion dies.

One mark of the shortcomings of the Sunday-school in its present system is the limitation of time to be given to actual religious instruction. Usually one hour or one hour and a quarter at most is given each week to the Sunday-school program. This time is necessarily reduced, by the elimination of the periods given to the opening and closing exercises and to other necessary features of the program, to twenty or thirty minutes for actual instruction. In the average Sunday-school it is a question whether more than twenty minutes of positive instruction are given. Barring the four Sundays in the year which are usually given to special programs, we have left forty-eight regular sessions. This would allow sixteen full hours per year for religious instruction in the Sunday-school. Add to this the fact that the average attendance in the Sunday-school is only about two thirds of the enrolment, the further fact that the average teacher is not well prepared for religious instruction, and the still further fact that most scholars do not spend any time in preparation of their lesson at home, and you have a situation which demands serious attention on the part of people who are interested in religion and religious instruction.

All of these features and more that might be named are not to be interpreted as a reflection upon the sys-

tem as much as a comment upon its limitations and a plea for a larger program, better training, better equipment, more time, greater reverence, and a more serious attitude toward the most vital thing in our church and educational activities. It calls for federation and cooperation in our activities, without which the largest results cannot be obtained.

May it be that the Sunday-school in the inspiration of the movement for federation and cooperation will develop in these new directions in the days soon to come.

The latest and one of the most striking illustrations of cooperation in religious education is to be found in the correlation of the work of the public schools with that of the Sunday-schools. This is accomplished in three ways which may be designated as the Greeley (Colorado) plan, the Gary (Indiana) plan, and the North Dakota plan.

By the first plan a system of cooperation in the preparation of teachers is provided between the state normal school and the local city churches. It has been so satisfactory that it may be commended to any community where training agencies for teachers in the public schools exist.

In the Gary plan certain hours of the children coming to or going from school may be unclaimed by the public schools at given periods each week and the action of their parents may direct the children to the church, the parish house, or the synagogue to receive religious instruction by the preacher, the priest, or the rabbi. According to this plan, neither school property

nor school employees are used for religious instruction, and neither Jew nor Christian, Catholic nor Protestant has ground for complaint. All of them are working in complete harmony with the spirit of the state to all the state furnishes equal opportunity.

Another form of cooperation, which was inaugurated some years ago in North Dakota, has proved successful in that state and elsewhere. In this plan the high schools accept for credit a certain amount of work done in the Sunday-school or synagogue or by other church societies or agencies, if the work including material, method, and examinations, is approved by the school authorities. Here, again, high-grade religious instruction is obtained by all who desire it without the use of public funds or the encroachment upon the principle of religious freedom. These all afford illustrations of cooperation in religious education.

A word may be said concerning religious education in the home through cooperation. Is it not possible that parents' clubs or associations may be formed for the awakening of interest in home religion? Special addresses and lectures on children's religion, the family altar, and parental piety might be procured. Opportunity for distributing religious literature, too, might be provided by this means. All of these things would tend indeed to a finer religious life.

These are a few of the ways in which some of the vital things of life as found in real religious study and inspiration may be procured through cooperation in religious education. They need not supplant but cer-

tainly can supplement the splendid work now done in practical and expressive lines of social service.

COOPERATION AND FEDERATION

John M. Moore

Cooperation and federation are terms that comprehend far-reaching and multiplied activities based upon high ideals and directed to noble ulterior ends. They are not words to be used by men of little heart and selfish purpose. To apply the principles which they involve is to usher in a period of reconstruction of church life in methods of operation, in the alinement of forces, and in the recognition of the objects to be achieved. Reconstruction is never child's play, for aside from its positive labors there is always strenuous opposition, and even serious conflict, from many honorable and devout persons who conscientiously and tenaciously hold to the things and conditions that are and look upon any change as revolutionary, mischievous, and even ruinous. Reconstruction that involves the church has to meet not only the deeply grounded convictions and prejudices of the people, but also the vigorous protests and frequently open hostility of strongly entrenched and widely dominant ecclesiasticism. Recognition of this fact will lead to discretion in the inauguration of new movements, to generous sympathy in dealing with the people and institutions

to be affected, and to a genuinely educational process with sufficient time allowed to make seeming iconoclasm impossible and the normally new conditions a certainty. The leaders of the churches in America to-day are called upon by the conditions of divided Christendom to undertake with courage and caution a great program of reconstruction that has for its objective the unifying and effectualizing of the Christian forces of this nation in city, town, and country, so that the church may have its rightful place in the leadership of all phases of national life and in the religious development of a great people whose Christian responsibilities are commensurate with the greatest of religious opportunities, and whose obligations are world-wide.

In no place does the church need greater strengthening than in the rural sections, where divisions are most pronounced, where neglect is most common, and where its leadership is most essential not only to religious life, but to every effort at social, intellectual, moral, and even industrial betterment. The rural church to-day is being called upon for a service which in its present state it cannot possibly render. It has not the spiritual vigor, the missionary outlook, the religious convictions, nor the intellectual qualifications for making it a mighty force in community direction and uplift, social, mental, and moral. It cannot command its environment nor grip the forces that control in rural progress.

For this there may be many reasons, but unquestionably one of the chief causes of its weakness and one of the greatest hindrances to the religious prog-

ress of many rural communities is the ever-existing assertive and exclusive denominationalism. Denominationalism grips the church and religious life of the rural people as a vise and asserts its authority as a despot. It is no new power. It came with the blood of the fathers and has grown in the very mental and moral fibers of the people. It has rooted itself in the conscience of the best men and women and even dominates the prejudices of the worst. The hard conflicts of the fathers of a century ago over the tenets of the various sects may have passed to oblivion in the towns and cities, but not so in many sections of the country. The battle no longer wages in fury, but the lines are still entrenched and the suggestion of a demobilization would be treated with gross indifference if not with open contempt. This stubborn condition cannot be ignored in any program of reconstruction. It must be faced and judiciously and religiously met if any success is to be hoped for.

The past value and present merit of denominationalism must be recognized and appreciated. Denominations are the direct and inevitable outcome of religious liberty. The middle section of the North American continent was the providential meeting-place of the various sects who left their respective European birthplaces to seek a new land where conscience might be free and religious thought and worship might be untrammeled. The superiority of American Christianity, whether Protestant or Roman, is due in no small measure to the very conditions that have produced a self-respecting and self-assertive de-

nominationalism. Denominationalism is not to be despised because of the narrowness, arrogance, and self-sufficiency of some boastful sect, or belated and limited class. It must be judged in the light of history and valued by its present force in giving to the world the light, truth, and power of the gospel through its representatives and the institutions which it produces. Denominationalism has on the Christian people of America a righteous hold that must be respected. In the course of time its devotion may be transferred to a larger and more comprehensive unit, but it should never be destroyed.

Men who are ambitious to bring in a new era for the farmers' church must take into account not only the need of a united Christianity and a unified church life in the country, but also the existing assertive and exclusive denominationalism in many communities, the larger, fuller, finer, and forceful denominationalism of American church life, and the great ecclesiastical activities of these denominations to maintain and promote their own standing in the religious world. Sentiment may dictate an action which self-interest, and that not wholly unrighteous, may oppose. What is the way through this labyrinth of church interests, with their historical and holy foundations? The present state cannot continue if rural progress is made possible.

The time has come when denominational cooperation in rural church life is practically essential to any great social and religious movement. The place to begin, however, it would seem, would not be in

the local community but in the denominational councils of those organizations that are directly involved. An attitude of fraternity, a sense of respect, a spirit of cooperation must be developed in the governing bodies and administrative agencies of the denominations before local cooperation and federation are possible. Some denominations have an exalted opinion of their providential and predestined importance and are not inclined to cooperation of any kind. They claim to be the Lord's peculiar people—and they are. Where such a denomination asserts itself in a community, federation is impossible and even religious harmony is rare. Denominational conceit seldom lends itself to the promotion of other than self-interests, however large or small the sphere in which it operates. The peace program of denominational comity and mutual respect must be carried out in every section before any great plans of cooperation can be entered upon. This will not be accomplished by the instantaneous process. It will require the long-time exposure, like the photographing of slowly moving stars.

Federation may be regarded by some persons with suspicion because it is a term implying compact, united government, headship, and a measure of control; but that suspicion may be dispelled by proper interpretation of the term. The Federated Church can scarcely be less than an independent union church and does not recommend itself to churchmen who are accustomed to connectionalism. Such a combination lacks vital relations. It is a convenience, and as such it

seldom inspires devotion, loyalty, and religious purpose. The finer and stronger virtues of the Christian life are, as a rule, not developed in such a church. The world moves in systems and in them man finds himself. The breaking down of denominations is no more to be sought in the rural districts than in the towns and cities. The cooperation of denominations, however, is not only merely desirable and feasible; it is now absolutely essential to any adequate religious life and service. Where more than one denomination is found in a community, the ministers who serve them should agree upon a common program which they will seek to carry out. No minister has a moral right to preach a sermon in such a way as to give offense to persons holding different doctrines, or so to express his beliefs that such persons are offended. He may teach his own doctrines when he feels impelled to it, but in doing so he may not decry and combat the views of others of his congregation who look to him for spiritual guidance and leadership, and thereby create an abiding disturbance in the community life. As a Methodist I make bold to say that a Methodist preacher who cannot preach from Sabbath to Sabbath to Baptists and not give offense, even when he proclaims Methodist views, has no business in the ministry. The narrow, offensive sectarian and the denominational bully can no longer represent Christianity in this country, whatever their church affiliations. Cooperation will at once rid all communities of such intolerant men.

Cooperation in its local application is best developed

by an association or federation of churches which has for its purpose the establishment and promotion of social fellowship among the ministers and other church leaders, and the agreement upon a county and community program of religious activity and social service. Every county in the nation, excepting the cities, should have such an association or federation, and every minister laboring in a county should welcome the opportunity of cooperative effort which the federation would insure. When a new minister comes to a county, he should seek the association at once or be sought by it. Ministers of whatever faith and order laboring in the same county should not be allowed to remain strangers to each other. Harassing denominationalism is due in no small measure to a lack of *esprit de corps* among the various ministers and of a program of community service which will demand for its execution the concerted action of all religious people.

Federation will help to Christianize rural denominationalism and give ecclesiasticism a sense of neighborly obligation. It will reveal to the intense sectarian the beauty and force of genuine Christian unity. It will clear away dividing walls, make plain the common task, and give Christian honor and brotherly love a chance to develop in rural communities the sacred things and purposes of life and genuine religion. Federation, or rather cooperation, will not only banish strife and unite the Christian forces, but it will bring to light and correct religious neglect and operate to promote a real cultivation of Christian vir-

tues and experience. Denominational independence, or individualism, is responsible for a large measure of the rural neglect of to-day. It is this that has divided the Christian people into feeble bands and made the support of competent ministers an impossibility. A consolidated Christianity is indispensable to the churches in the open country if they are to promote rural progress and furnish leadership in the highest interests of country life. This consolidation will be possible only when the emphasis is transferred from denominational success to the religious development of all the people, when the program of the country church shall be large enough to include all necessary community service, and when the gospel preached by all ministers shall bring life and immortality to light and usher in the kingdom of God wherein dwelleth righteousness. The moral and religious needs of thousands of rural communities in our great country furnish unmistakable evidence of the futility of denominations operating individually and alone and without regard to others; and they cry out against further postponement of great cooperative efforts on the part of the churches that will respect the religious beliefs of all and neglect the social, moral, and religious needs of none.

LAND TENURE AND THE RURAL CHURCH

Henry Wallace

The prosperity of the rural church has in all ages and in all countries been determined largely by the tenure by which farmers hold their lands. A prosperous country church means a relatively large rural population—large enough to support a minister, to push the work of the church vigorously, to impress its ideals of life and character on the community, and to do its part in extending the gospel to outside sections and to foreign lands.

It requires, second, that farming be on an economic basis; that is, that farmers are making money. For the church is always and everywhere supported, not by capital, but by profits; and if the farmer is not making a comfortable living or is sinking his capital, he does not have the means of supporting the church. And if he does not have the means, his will to support the church will be ineffective.

In the third place, the prosperous rural church requires a reasonably stable population. So much of the Christian life lies in Christian relations with neighbors, with employees, with employers, with the whole community life, that a roving farm population cannot, even if it would, develop Christian graces or impress itself favorably on a community of unbelievers. The farm owner who has moved to town and is renting his land cannot be expected to be a real, vital force in

the rural church. Nor can the tenant who has a one-year lease, or whose tenure is uncertain, be expected to cultivate the Christian graces by intimate fellowship with his neighbors and associates or fellow church-members; in other words, to take root in the community and become a part of it.

One thing more. The prosperous country church requires that there be an agreement among the members as to the big things for which the church stands: the sinfulness of men; the possibility of redemption from sinfulness; growth in Christian graces; the efficiency of the gospel to make better husbands, better wives, better parents, better children, better farmers, better business men, better neighbors, better citizens. Success need not be expected if minor things of which Jesus said nothing and upon which the apostles laid no emphasis, such as forms of church government and modes of baptism, are regarded as the essential things for which the church stands. If the church is to be successful, there must be toward these matters a body of sentiment which makes hearty cooperation and Christian fellowship possible.

These, as I see it, are the conditions of the prosperous rural church. These conditions prevailed when the rural church was in the height of its prosperity in the early part of the last century. There was then a dense population per square mile in the settled portions of the country, because the farmer was then a child of the woods, hewing his way painfully through the forests of the Eastern and Middle States, and requiring a lifetime to clear up a quarter

section or even an eighty. He was a man of the ax and cradle and scythe and flail. Rural congregations were large then; and the spirit of the farmer of that day is reflected in the names that he gave to his church, —names fragrant of the spirit of piety and devotion and showing close acquaintance with the Bible,— Bethel, Rehoboth, Mount Zion, Ebenezer.

There was then no pull to the city, for the cities were small, as they must needs be, since there was not the wherewithal to feed a large city population, nor adequate means of transportation. Labor was cheap, land was cheap, living was cheap; and the farm was mainly a means of supporting a large family cheaply. There were no landlords, no tenants. While no one was getting rich, all but the incompetent were getting ahead, and the minister was the outstanding big man in the community—" guide, philosopher, and friend " to all, a consoler in sickness or sorrow, an adviser in trouble. There was unity as to the great doctrines of Christianity. Not that all were agreed; but the various nationalities, with their forms of worship and religious thought and customs, grouped themselves together in localities—the Pennsylvania Dutch here, the Scotch and Scotch-Irish there, the Quakers elsewhere, the Yankees in other groups.

All this changed when the farmer emerged from the woods and drew long furrows in the rich, fertile soil of the prairies; and still greater was the change when, at the close of the war, the government gave one hundred and sixty acres of land at the cost of surveying ($1.25 an acre) to any landless man in the

wide world who wanted it and who would become a citizen of the United States.

Then began the rush for these cheap lands, a rush from New England, from the Middle States, from the South, and from Europe. The farming population began a game of leap-frog. The church organizations, awake to the importance of securing a foothold in this new land, pushed their missionary enterprises, aiming to occupy strategic points. These missionary operations were not for the conversion of the unsaved or of the stranger; they resulted in the transfer of church-members from the older countries to the new and in grouping them together in the choicest portions of this newly opened paradise. The result was a mingling together of men who, while they agreed on fundamentals, gave special importance to distinctives; and a still further result was the overchurching of the entire prairie country.

Then the rural church began to decline; for the introduction of railroads and of farm machinery and a far greater use of horse power decreased rural population per square mile. It has constantly been decreasing ever since from purely economic causes. Still the rural church did fairly well, although gradually declining in the size and number of congregations, until the last thirty years, when another set of economic conditions began to render it less efficient.

When thoughtful men began to see that there was no more choice land to be given away; when the great growth of city population not merely in the United States but in the Old World (the result of cheap food

furnished by the farmers of the United States at less than the cost of growing it) began to bring the price of grain up to the cost of production and above it, land began to advance. In the corn belt, the wheat belt, and the fruit belt land has increased at the rate of about ten per cent. per annum.

The country church then began to decline more rapidly. Farmers began to rent their farms and move to town. Capitalists began to invest in lands as soon as the net income would equal the interest on savings, and speculators began to buy land far in advance of its productive value, on the assumption that this ten per cent. per annum increase in price would continue. One result of this was an enormous increase in tenancy, until about thirty-seven and one half per cent. of the tillable lands of the United States was farmed by tenants. In the corn belt from forty to fifty per cent. of the land is farmed by tenants, and in the cotton belt from fifty to seventy per cent.

Meanwhile the use of improved machinery and of horse power instead of man power tended to increase the size of farms and to decrease the population per square mile. A recent investigation by the Iowa Agricultural Department shows that, while the increase in the size of farms that are farmed by their owners is less than four per cent., the increase in the size of those farmed by tenants is sixteen per cent. It shows further that in sections in which land is bought for speculation tenancy has increased very rapidly. We have three main classes of landlords: retired farmers, capitalists, and speculators, or speculating capitalists;

and the lands of all these classes are necessarily farmed by tenants.

Inasmuch as we have not yet really begun to farm in the West, but are simply mining our soil and selling its fertility (at present at a profit), the tenure of the tenant is mainly for one year; this condition makes about forty-five per cent. of the population of the open country in Iowa more or less unstable. The tenant who goes into a new community for a year does not usually aline himself with a church unless he is a man of very positive religious convictions. Neither does the church look upon the tenant as anything more than a pilgrim and a stranger, and hence it is apt to think it not worth while to gather him into the fold.

Another influence is powerfully effective. Members of churches who bought land, especially in the corn belt, at from $25 to $50 an acre thirty years ago, could not resist the temptation to harvest the unearned increment and invest it in the newer lands of the spring wheat belt, or the plains, or the Northwest. They moved to the new country, taking their families with them. This has decreased the financial ability of the congregation of the country church, has reduced the salary of the minister to the starvation point, or has perhaps compelled the congregation to have preaching for but one half or one third of the time, and, in certain sections, for only one fourth of the time. This deprives the community of the pastoral labor and the example of a Christian leader and his family; and the result is that the church declines and then dies.

In fact, the churches in the towns of the corn belt are largely built up by the removal of members of country churches to the towns.

The farms are becoming larger, and the population of the rural community smaller and more unstable because of tenantry. The population remaining is divided up into various denominations and sects through difference of opinion about church government and baptism and other things, the inheritance of a past generation, but of which Christ said little or nothing and on which the example of the apostles differs.

There are two remedies for this condition, one industrial and the other spiritual. Neither is capable of instant application, but each is certainly applicable in the somewhat distant future. The first is such a system of leasing as will make the tenant a reasonably permanent citizen in the community,—in other words, longer leases. There is nothing permanent in this world, for as the poet has said:

> "Pale death treads with equal foot
> The palace of the rich
> And the hovels of the poor."

So he "treads with equal foot" in our day the home of the landlord and the home of the tenant.

Tenancy is not in itself an evil, but uncertainty of tenure and short leases are evils that vex humanity. We cannot expect to see a prosperous rural church until the tenant can make some arrangement with his landlord by which he can stay on the same farm indefinitely, take root in the community, become an ac-

tive member of the church, and make of his children real members of the Sunday-school and rural school.

Economic causes themselves will force upon the landowner this system of longer leases. The constant decrease of soil fertility through the bad farming of the short-lease tenant and the fact now becoming evident that it is more profitable to the enterprising farmer to rent land than to own it, must work for the greater permanency of the tenant. The first will wipe out speculation and reduce land values in the richer sections until it will be possible for the tenant by renting land to become the owner of the land. This will give us a stable population and greatly increase the efficiency of the rural church.

The second remedy is in the change of view of the Christian ideal. In the pioneer days the ideal of Christianity was the salvation of the individual soul. Those were the days of the circuit-riders, of protracted meetings and basket meetings, and sometimes of hypnotic influence which passed for the work of the Spirit.

As the country became settled and the farmer ceased to be a nomad, the ideal of Christianity was that of the Christian family. Large families were to be reared cheaply on low-priced land owned by the farmer himself; they were to be baptized, catechized, and pastorally visited, all in the expectation that when they came to years of maturity they would take upon themselves the vows of the parents. If infant baptism was not practiced, it was thought that the growing children would become members of the church through

immersion. In those days the church was an aggregation of these families, and the minister was expected to voice the doctrinal convictions of the members. He was not expected to pay much attention to community salvation.

We must now get back to the original Christian idea: that salvation is for every man and for every part of the man—body, soul, and spirit; that it involves loving "thy neighbor as thyself," and cooperation in every good work instead of competition. When the rural church gets a firm hold of this idea and insists on the great essentials of Christianity—free salvation to all who will accept it, temperance, righteousness, judgment to come,—people who have the love of God in their hearts will be drawn together, and they will forget about the differences that have separated them and rendered them inefficient.

I have great hope of the union of churches; for churches do not believe in their distinctive principles sufficiently to carry them to their logical conclusion. And the life of the church is not after all in the things upon which churches differ, but in those on which they agree. When it comes to these, Ephraim will no longer covet Judah nor Judah vex Ephraim, but combining their forces, they will advance on the Philistines and win the unbelievers.

As it is now, not fifty per cent. of the people living in the open country attend church with any degree of regularity. Why should they, unless religion is so taught that it bears upon their farming, upon their trading, upon their home life, upon their recreations?

Really, it is not worth while for the churches to spend money to propagate what are known as their distinctive principles. One sort of church government works out practically about the same as all the rest, and none of them have any Scriptural warrant. The ethical code, the real spiritual life of the churches, is much the same in all its branches, including the Catholic.

The thing for the church to do is to get a vision of the gospel that fits like a self-grown garment or covering to every part of life. A reasonably permanent tenure of lands by ownership or by lease will do much to advance the kingdom of God; but the great push will come from a higher ideal of Christianity and the Christian life. This will draw or pull those who are really hungry and who feel in their bitter moments that no man careth for their souls.

Even though the rural church should make great advance, it will not have the large congregations of fifty or seventy-five or a hundred years ago because the people are not there. Farming will be more productive than ever before when we really learn how to farm; and the church will then be on an economic basis. The wiping out of divisions over things that really do not matter will unify the sentiment not merely of the churches but of the people who have not heretofore united themselves with the church. A religion that appeals both to the intellect and the emotions, that can sanctify the sports and recreation of the people, will have a powerful drawing influence over the farmer. For the farmer is at heart a religious

man, whether he belongs to the church or not. He responds promptly to every appeal to his better nature. He is not interested in "higher criticism" or in theological speculation. He is not the least interested in negations. He lives too near God for that. A church united on the fundamentals, and with a reasonably permanent tenure of lands by ownership or lease, will enable us in time to build up a civilization on the prairies and the cleared timber lands more satisfying than that which can be found anywhere else on earth.

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF GOOD FARMING AND GOOD PREACHING

George N. Luccock

The farm problem is not solved by a satisfactory return at the market, and the preacher's task is not consummated in the praise of pulpit performance. Both farmer and preacher are vitally concerned, and with tremendous mutual interest, in a great life movement. At bottom, both men's responsibility is how to make the country a better place to live, and better people to live there. Good buildings, good fences and fields, good soil, good crops, good stock, good markets, good roads, and like things are all worth while and to be striven after as means to good living among good people.

After all, the big thing in the country, to be reached

there as elsewhere by adapted methods, is just like the big objective in the city or wherever men and women and boys and girls live. Human nature is the same everywhere, and the fundamental good is the common need of all. And God has shown us what is good, and one who spoke for him put that good into very beautiful words. To do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God—that is the great community ideal. That is good farming and that is good preaching which combine to produce that ideal. That ideal worked out in daily life will make landowner and tenant happier in each other, will sweeten the relation between those who hire and those who are hired, will provide for the poor and the stranger, and tend to make all human life the expression of divine life in that best of all environments, God's wonderful out-of-doors.

The indispensable inspirational center for such living is the farmer-supported country church. The man with the plow and the man with the Book must be mated for effective team work. Each must be sensitive to the mood and method of the other, or friction and wasted energy and disheartening results will follow. The preacher who uses his country pulpit as a practice park for the city game, dreaming, amid the fields, of promotion away from them, is the same sort of a hinderer to good living in the country as the farmer who takes his family in the automobile past the cross-roads church to the fashion-filled pews of the city church. The net result is a discouraged preacher and a discontented neighborhood. No preacher was

ever ordained to break his heart and batter out his brains on the backs of empty pews. Farmers who neglect their community churches are doing their best to depress the value of land by filling country pulpits with depressed preachers.

Of all men the progressive farmer is best furnished to appreciate team work. Students of the soil tell us that in the beneficence of our Heavenly Father vast stores of plant food are already present in the bosom of mother earth, ready for the uses of the infant plant. Certain important elements must be provided by the beneficiary of earth's bounty. It has been found further that plant growth is limited by the lowest element in the supply of plant food. Even a superabundance of phosphorus and nitrogen will not produce their best unless adequately supplemented by potash. The lack of one element actually limits the efficiency of the other elements present in such abundance. You cannot get capacity service from even the most vital element of plant food save in combination with its proper supplements. The same law of interdependence governs, in a larger way, the relations between the parson and the plowman. Neither can render capacity service to the community except in combination with the other.

So simple a matter as the faithful, loyal attendance of the farmer and his family upon the services of the community church quickens the preacher to his pulpit best. The assurance of that attendance stimulates him in the whole process of preparing his sermons, gladdens him in all the round of his pastoral work. For

all his hard labor in the study he cannot be one hundred per cent. efficient in the pulpit without the support of his people, any more than phosphorus can be one hundred per cent. efficient without the support of sufficient companion elements of plant food. I can take you to farms all over the country where people have covered their land with expensive fertilizer without getting commensurate returns for their labor and their sacrifice, because the returns from the things they provided are limited by the lack of the things they failed to provide. And I can take you to country churches where some of the ablest and hardest working of the Master's servants are wearing themselves out in fruitless toil because so many of the farmers will not supplement that great element in community betterment by keeping up church attendance. And whether in town or city, the man who habitually neglects church attendance is doing his wicked best to blight the land with the curse of a churchless community.

Turning now to the other part of this team, I wish to state clearly that good preaching is equally indispensable to the most fruitful farming. Without what the preacher gives him no farmer can be at his best. He also needs heart for his work. For one thing, the blue devils seem to have a particular spite toward the farmer. Anyhow, he does more complaining about the weather than any other citizen in the kingdom of God. And like every other mortal he needs to be sharply summoned from the sordid.

The greatest service a preacher can be to a farmer is not to teach him how to raise better crops. The

preacher ought to inspire the farmers to become so expert in their calling that he himself will feel but an amateur in their presence. That, I'm saying, is the ideal. His contribution to the forces of fruitfulness in their common task is different from theirs. Sometimes men of the soil become so obsessed by the idea of green manuring that this becomes the panacea for all land complaints. And there are times when the sick land, if it had a voice, would cry out to the plowman, "For the land's sake, quit it. I've got all the green stuff I want. Give me some more potash and a whole lot more phosphorus." And a situation can very easily be imagined in which the precious half hour of the pulpit was perverted to a learned argument on soil improvement, and the work-weary audience of farmers felt like crying right out in meeting, "For goodness' sake, parson, quit it. We have all the green stuff now that we want without your handing us any more. Give us something for mind and heart."

But while the farmer does not need a preacher to tell him how to raise better crops, or teach him better farm management, or to be to him the advance agent of newer methods, the preacher can and ought to be an inspiration to the farmer in all that has to do with making him more successful in subduing the earth. The preacher ought to make himself intelligent on the occupations and ambitions of his people. He ought to be in fullest sympathy with them in their tasks and problems. He ought to be the first to warm up to forward movements and to praise a successful experiment. He ought to be a man of vision

for his community, seeing clearest and feeling deepest where old customs retard progress, and making vivid the promise of better things. He, better than any other man in the township, should be able to inspire the youth of the neighborhood with a great and growing love for the land. He himself, beyond the power of his sermons, by his mere presence, whether in church or in the fields or in the homes or on the road, should quicken the enthusiasm of the whole community for the chance God gives to them there. He must love farming and love farm people so deeply and genuinely that when they see him draw near they will feel the approach of good cheer. Just as the farmer's presence in the pew reacts on the pulpit, quickening the preacher to a better sermon, so the farmer feeling the optimism of the preacher will both plow a straighter furrow and put more heart into his task, not because of the man himself, but because of a heightened sense of the values of life, unconsciously suggested by the man whose calling it is to guide men in the walk with God.

The very calling of the preacher, with the whole church program, honored in a community beyond any other influence, strengthens the tie that binds the lad to the land. No worth-while young fellow ever left the country because of its hard work. He left because of the feeling that life elsewhere was not easier, but better, more worth while, less narrow and choking, more free and gladsome. He was driven by a craving for something he was not getting in the country. He felt life had something he was losing.

Here is the preacher's supreme chance to serve the farmer. Certainly he will be a leader in all social activities, in institutes, in lecture courses, in all community betterment movements. But back of and under and working through all these he will be something bigger. He will as a good minister of Jesus Christ be interpreting life in terms of the higher good, in terms of service, keeping ever before him the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And he will find that the farmer is his best ally, that the very laws of successful soil tillage are likewise the laws of the kingdom of God, the laws of the spiritual life.

To the old adage that there is no excellence without great labor, modern agriculture has added the realization that there is no excellence without great sacrifice. It is indeed quite indispensable that the preacher to farm people be able to give his message in terms of farm life and experience. But to be able to do that spontaneously and helpfully he must first of all see nature herself in terms of theology. No one can teach theology, or, if you please, preach the gospel, in terms of agricultural thinking who is not first fascinated by the spiritual lessons taught by agriculture to his own heart.

Let me here bear my testimony to the homiletic value of a course of reading along the line of scientific farming. For several years, besides books and bulletins, I have read, with keenest interest, a half dozen farm papers every week, and to me no line of reading has been equally stimulating in pulpit prepara-

tion. Any preacher, in the city or in the country, will both know and feel the meaning of his Bible better by some initiative into the secrets of the soil.

And I think the preacher who is a specialist to the country church may be and of right ought to be for years to come the best read man on agriculture in the community. For one thing, he has time to read, time when he is not too physically exhausted to enjoy reading, and he has the trained habit of reading. For another thing, this reading is in line with the most immediate interests of his people, and it is also directly in line with his own high spiritual calling. Such reading gives him a richer acquaintance with God and therefore manifolds his spiritual power.

For example, one of the commonest newer words in the vocabulary of the farm to-day is humus. But humus is just agricultural self-denial, the great sacrifice hit in the big game with nature. Humus produces a condition in which the soil below is aerated, has a chance to breathe, and the life that is there gets its liberty. Besides, it sets free certain elements of plant food already there, but not hitherto available. Just watch a man with a plow turning down his splendid clover field and sacrificing tons of valuable hay! But suppose that turning it under results in so much better soil condition that he doubles his corn crop!

But there you have the heart of the gospel. If ever it seemed that the world was losing much by a life sacrifice, it was when Jesus Christ was crucified in early manhood. But that was love's way of renewing the wornout soil of human hearts by the humus of

heaven. What world liberties followed that sacrifice! What elements of strength were set free for world service, elements of power already there but not hitherto available.

When people get hold of that gospel, whether in the country or in the city, life has a new meaning, work has a new meaning, harvests have a new value. For therein is revealed the greatest of all secrets of success, namely, the wonderful law of conversion of values. No man wants to work for nothing, and nature does not ask any man to work for nothing; but rather good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, does nature give back to a man's bosom. Suppose a man takes hold of a field that never produced more than fifteen bushels of wheat per acre and makes it yield twenty-five. Of course he is ten bushels an acre happier by bin measure. But he has a bosom as well as a bin. And by the bosom measure he is away ahead of the game. He swells with a proper pride. He has surprised the neighbors, and that is worth while. He has made good in his venture. His sacrifice has justified itself. And there is joy in that. But best of all, he has proved the promises of nature, and there is thrill there, the birth of a larger hope. He had heard the cry of the neglected and mistreated earth,—" Bring ye all the points of efficiency in soil management,—a properly prepared seed-bed, and a balanced ration of plant food, that there may be food in my furrows and prove me now herewith if I will not open to you the secrets of the soil and grow you a harvest such as your bins shall not be able

to contain it." And because he made good in his venture, nature made good in her promises. No trouble about keeping that boy on the farm. You could not pry him loose. What's happened? Well, something's happened to his bins. They are fuller. But something bigger has happened to his bosom. He has a new faith in nature. He is willing to trust her. Willing? Nay, he finds the good and the glory of life in becoming a colaborer with nature.

That's one lesson. Here's another and a bit deeper. One gets another kind of return to his bosom by his investment, and learns a little more of the great law of the conversion of values. A man sends his boy to college and expects value received on a pretty big investment. But he does not expect that value to come back to his bins or to his bank account. It comes back to his bosom, and he has learned how much more money is worth than the bank balance shows. And no man is a good farmer until he has increased the productiveness of the land as he ought to do, and developed his marketing efficiency as he ought to do, and in addition to all that learned to put the right valuation on his dollars. And the farmer who has this higher sense of the worth of a dollar, and is not satisfied until he has realized its bosom value in the service of his fellow man, is the man God meant for the farm.

How slow we all are to accept progress under the law of self-sacrifice! We want to pay little and get much. And we keep forever trying to beat down the price. Out yonder in the field, the farmer is asking the price of a hundred bushels of corn per acre. "Tell

me, O field, the price of one hundred bushels of corn per acre." And across the face of the field there sweeps a rippling smile as it had been the face of an angel. For the earth is the Lord's and glows with the good-will of God, eager to give bread to the eater and seed to the sower. The price? "Just one price to all. First the plow and then the harrow and every tool to make a proper seed-bed. Plenty of air by proper drainage. Plenty of plant food for the increasing needs of the growing grain. And then you must keep plowing to kill the weeds, and more important than that to conserve my moisture. After every shower, you must break up my surface, else the capillary chimneys will let the moisture escape, and I'll suffer from thirst when the summer drought comes." And then the farmer begins to press down the price. "Can't I," he wheedles, "can't I cut out some of those cultivations? We shall be awfully busy. Father used to quit tending his corn in early July. And can't I get along with a little less fertilizer? Times are hard. Taxes are terribly high." The old human habit, which we call jewing down, but which really antedates Judaism by several thousand years, asserts itself at every demand of nature. What is the result? A reduction in the bushels per acre exactly in proportion to beating down the price. And a consequent sterner penalty comes too,—a relaxed sensitiveness to the value of scientific farming, a losing out in the larger game of agricultural life. On the other hand the man who gives to the earth his best will find the earth giving back to him, good measure, pressed down, shaken to-

gether, and running over. But he gets back vastly more than just increase in kind. He gets a new heart for his work. He gets a new and vaster outlook upon his vocation. He gets a new conception of his place and chance in the scheme of things.

Other kinds of sacrifice than those for personal profit come with their call. Higher applications of the law of conversion of values enter his thoughts. He becomes a dreamer of dreams. A man of visions. He gets to seeing things for the common good. The spirit of service takes hold of his heart. He is coming to think in terms of ideals. He is coming to place a higher value upon the returns that come back to his bosom than upon those that come back to his bins. He looks beyond an increased output from his fields and from his yards, beyond a better handling of the marketing end of his task, beyond his own better house and barn and better equipment, and thinks of a better schoolhouse, of a better church, of better roads, of a more beautiful countryside, of shorter days in the fields and longer evenings with the neighbors, of community organization not only for its own higher benefits but for the higher satisfactions afforded in a wider service.

And here it is that the preacher's best and the farmer's best are merged into one. For here it is that the proper ambition of the one and the proper message of the other find their common ground. For just as the preacher declares that Christ sacrificing himself to rise again in the glory of a fruitful life is the hope of the world, so the farmer finds that

except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, and that to sacrifice one's personal good for the common benefit is to find—not only to find that life again but to find it in a better world to live it in.

And thus working together this man of the Field and this man of the Book create that best of all community assets, an atmosphere of contentment and peace, an atmosphere in which one thanks God to have been born and for the precious privilege of abiding. And for the purpose of maintaining that let the preacher count as possibly his highest privilege to go from home to home and guide the household devotions at the family altar.

Several years ago I journeyed toward a peach country with the liveliest anticipations of delight. In the morning I thought my eyes would be feasting on thousands of peach-trees in full bloom. But that very morning there came a killing frost, and every opening bud, betrayed into bloom by the false promise of spring, was caught in the embrace of death. Far more tender and sensitive to the chill of a frigid atmosphere than the delicate bloom of peach-trees is the heart of a child, opening to the will of God. What if the warmth and glow of natural affection be only as the false promise of spring, summoning the dormant life of undeveloped mind and heart into the bloom of self-consciousness, of intelligent inquiry as to life's values, and when the awakened heart of the child turns with glad choice toward Christ, the Sun of righteousness, the atmosphere of the home, instead of being warm

and fostering, is toward the eager impulses of the child like the dreadful coming of a frost that kills!

The great orchardists are finding it practicable to prepare against the sudden frosts that often in a night destroy the expectation of a year and the fair promise of a favoring springtime. They have a system of heaters, ready for instant lighting, distributed through the orchard and electrically connected with thermometers among the trees and an alarm mechanism in the home, so that when the temperature approaches the danger point, the home is aroused and the fires lighted; immediately the ascending smoke among the trees arrests the descending temperature and the tender bloom is saved. By word and life let the preacher say to the farmer: "Are not children, your children, of more value than many orchards?" God has placed in the home the most delicate, the most sensitive of all alarm mechanisms,—a mother's heart. Only let that be connected by the electric current of watchful love with the family altar, most heavenly of all heaters in the home, and the ascending incense from that will be potent to stay the descending temperature of a cold world above the point of menace to the life of the spirit.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL

Shailer Mathews

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is a body composed of representative officials drawn from thirty different Protestant churches or denominations, and represents a constituency of something like seventeen million church-members. It is not seeking to produce organic union among these various bodies, but to help each to represent its common interest in those great tasks which those who believe in Jesus Christ as the divine Lord must face. Through its commissions it is engaged in various investigative and constructive operations, but it does not seek to produce any minimum creed to which all may assent. It is not a theological body, but believes that the way evangelistic Christians can get together is for them to work together.

The Federal Council represents in a way this growing spirit of cooperation which is to be found throughout the United States. The problems which Christianity faces are both local and national, both those of thought and those of action. The Federal Council has no panacea for the difficulties which religion must face, but it does undertake to express the common Christian attitude toward such problems as must be faced cooperatively if they are to be answered efficiently.

During the past year the Council has been giving

attention to such highly important matters as the application of Christianity to international affairs, the problems and future of the rural church, the advancement of religious education, and the federation of various movements which have themselves undertaken to unify other movements. We who represent this policy are not intoxicated by any theory of centralization. Much less do we undertake to exert authority over the bodies who chose our constituent members. We do believe, however, that the Christian spirit of the United States must find its expression in the spirit of social transformation and the evangelizing of the forces which are to reconstruct the various communities which go to make up our nation. Certain of these forces cannot be transformed. They must be destroyed. The Christian spirit cannot endure the existence of vice, much less the agencies which undertake to make commercial profit out of vice. In such undertakings as these, doctrinal differences play no part. Hostility to evil is a fundamental trait of all denominations and churches in Christianity.

But there are other fields into which our Christian spirit must move, where destruction is less important than transformation. The present crisis in the world particularly brings home to us the need of the application of the principles of Jesus to international affairs. The great basis on which we stand as Christians implies the belief that Jesus Christ is to be taken seriously, that his teachings have application to nations as truly as to individuals, that the extent of success we have already reached in applying them to economic

questions must be duplicated and exceeded in the building up of good-will among nations. To give justice rather than to fight for rights,—that is the center of the ethical teaching of Jesus, and such sacrificial social-mindedness must be the aim of nations as well as of individuals. That which concerns us as churches is not primarily peace, but that attitude of mind, those social conditions, those economic policies, upon which peace depends. The Christian is not a peace-at-any-price man, but he is a righteousness-at-any-price man. To bring this into our national life is a part of our Christian duty. We wish to keep the church absolutely distinct from the state, but we do not want to keep Christianity out of our statesmanship.

The same feeling applies to patriotism. We wish to transform patriotism from a belligerent into a co-operative virtue. To that end we can see patriotism in paying taxes as well as in going to war, and in the cooperation of churches as well as in the mobilization of armies. Our country communities as well as our city communities must receive more attention from the earnest Christian spirit. We wish to save individuals, not merely to rescue them, and we believe that the power of Jesus is not limited by geography or race. Thus the Federal Council stands not for a new ecclesiastical authority, but as an agency of denominational cooperation, Christian fellowship, and efficient evangelization.

THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY CENTER

William F. Anderson

The importance of the rural life movement is attested by many facts. Probably more than half of the population of the country lives in rural communities, that is, in towns and villages of twenty-five hundred people and fewer. That the movement has taken a strong grip upon the life of the nation, is apparent by the attention which it is receiving from leaders of thought and life everywhere. The literature which has already developed upon the subject is extensive and of high grade. It scarcely seems possible, when one considers the widespread interest in the movement, that the first rural life commission was created by the authority of the United States government so recently as 1908.

By common consent the church is the center of the community life. The fact is that man's entire life centers in the religious ideal. The providential arrangement of affairs places a primal emphasis upon religion and its relation to the other phases of human life. The incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the central fact of history. All time preceding it was simply a preparation for it; all time subsequent to it has been given for the development of the significance of the fact, for the development of the life, customs, and institutions of mankind.

If the church is to be the center of the community

life, it must get the right conception as to its mission. The church is not an end within itself, but a means toward an end. It would not be strange if there should be those who advance the objection that this is an unworthy appraisal of the church's standing. I would remind such of that profound basic principle of human life, stated in the words of our Lord, regarding the significance of the life of the individual: "He that would save his life must lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall find it." If it be true of the life of the individual that he must attain his highest spiritual significance by the gift of his life in service to his fellow men, I hold that it is equally true of that aggregation of individuals known as the church. The church must lose its life in service to the community; and the church that gives itself to this ideal of life is the church of the future, by whatsoever name it may be known ecclesiastically.

Now the question may arise as to whether the church, if it fills this ideal, may not lose touch with the broader world movements of denominational life. Such an objection has sometimes been urged. Certainly it is not necessary, in strong communities, that such should be the case. Such a church, for instance, as the Epworth Memorial Church in Cleveland has found its interest in the world movements intensified by a more direct application of its activities to the needs of the community. The objection undoubtedly is more valid in the weaker communities; and I see but one solution of the problem in these weaker communities, namely, that the church which predominates

in strength shall have right of way; and that thus it may develop not only a local strength, but have sufficient vitality also to keep up its interest in world-wide missionary movements.

A survey of the situation in the state of Ohio has brought to light some rather startling facts. For example, a large number of townships in the rural parts of the state are almost entirely destitute of provision for the religious life of the community. There rests upon the leaders of the different denominations in this situation a perfectly tremendous responsibility. The principle which should guide us all in the administration of the affairs of our respective denominations is not a narrow sectarian policy which obtained in the past but the interests of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is the really big thing which must by all effort be conserved. That we have our denominational affiliations and loyalties is of course to be expected; but the man who places a sectarian, denominational ideal before the interests of the Kingdom is not abreast of the larger redemptive movements of the day.

The several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the state of Ohio have already, by formal action, voted to cooperate with our sister denominations in this regard. And indeed the leaders of the respective denominations in certain communities have already been cooperating in the interests of the larger Kingdom by a policy of mutual consideration and yielding.

THE RURAL CHURCH AS A VITALIZING AGENT

Woodrow Wilson

I want first to express my very deep gratitude to you for the cordial manner in which you have greeted me, and my sense of privilege in standing here before you to speak about some of the things in which we are mutually interested. You, gentlemen, are perhaps more interested in those matters of policy which affect the business of the country than in any others; and yet it has never seemed to me possible to separate the business of a country from its essential spirit and the life of its people. The mistake that some men have made has been in supposing that business was one thing and life another; whereas, they are inseparable in their principles and in their expression.

I must say that in looking back upon the past there is something about the history of business in this country which is not wholly satisfactory. It is interesting to remember that in the early years of the republic we felt ourselves more a part of the general world than we have felt since then. There is no real antithesis; a man lives as he believes he ought to live, or as he believes that it is of advantage to live. He lives upon a doctrine, upon a principle, upon an idea,—sometimes a very low principle, sometimes a very exalted principle.

I used to be told when I was a youth that some of the old causalities reduced all sin to egotism. And I

have thought as I have watched the career of some individuals that the analysis had some vital point to it.

An egotist is a man who has got the whole perspective of life wrong. He conceives of himself as the center of affairs; he conceives of himself as the center of affairs even as affects the providence of God. He has not related himself to the great forces which dominate him with the rest of us, and therefore has set up a little kingdom all his own in which he reigns with unhonored sovereignty.

And so there are some men who set up the principle of individual advantage as the principle, the doctrine, of their life, and live generally a life that leads to all sorts of shipwreck. Whatever our doctrine be, our life is conformed to it, but what I want to speak of is not the contrast between doctrine and life but the translation of doctrine into life.

After all, Christianity is not important to us because it is a body of conceptions regarding man and God, but because it is a vital body of conceptions which can be translated into life for us; life in this world and a life still greater in the next.

And except as Christianity changes and inspires life it has failed of its mission. That is what Christ came into the world for, to save our spirits; and you cannot have your spirit altered without having your life altered.

When I think of the rural church, therefore, I wonder how far the rural church is vitalizing the lives of the community in which it exists. We have had a great deal to say recently, and it has been very

profitably said, about the school as a social center, by which is meant the schoolhouse as a social center; about making the house which, in the daytime, is used for the children, a place which their parents may use in the evenings and at other disengaged times for the meetings of the community; where the people are privileged to come together and talk about anything that is of community interest, and talk about it with the utmost freedom.

Some people have been opposed to it because there are some things that they do not want talked about. Some boards of education have been opposed to it because they realized that it might not be well for the board of education to be talked about. Talk is a very dangerous thing. Community comparisons of views are a very dangerous thing to the men who are doing the wrong thing. But I, for my part, believe in making the school the social center, the place that the community can use for any kind of coordinating that it wants to do in its life.

But I believe that where the schoolhouse is inadequate, and even where it is adequate, the most vital social center should be the church itself. And that, not by way of organizing the church as a social church. That is not my topic to-night. That is another topic. I speak of the need of making communities realize that the congregations, and particularly the pastors, are interested in everything that is important for the community, and that the members of the church are ready to coördinate and the pastor ready to lend his time and his energy to the amount of organization which

is necessary outside the church as well as in, for the benefit of the community.

It seems to me that the country pastor has an unparalleled opportunity to be a country leader; to make everybody realize that he is the representative of Christ; to prove himself related to everything human, to everything human that has as its object the uplift and construction and inspiration of the community for the betterment of any of its conditions. If any pastor will make it felt throughout the community that this is his spirit and this is his interest, and that he is ready to draw his elders and his deacons and his vestrymen with him as active agents in the betterment of the community, the church will begin to have a dominating influence in the community such as it has lost for the time being and which we must find means to regain.

For example, one of the things that the department of agriculture at Washington is trying to do for the farming community is to show the farmers of the country the easiest and best methods of cooperation with regard to marketing their crops; to teach them how to handle their crops in a cooperative fashion, so that they can get the best service from the railroads and learn how to find the prevailing market prices in the accessible markets. Thus they will come to know where it will be best and most profitable to send their farm products and will draw themselves together into cooperative associations with these objects in view.

The church ought to lend its hand to that. The pastor ought to say: "If you want somebody to look after this for you, I will give part of my time, and

I will find other men in my congregation who will help you without charging you anything for it. We want you to realize that this church is interested in the lives of the people of this country, and that it will lend itself to any legitimate project that advances the life and interests of the people of this country."

Let the rural church find that and then discover, as it will discover, that men begin to swing their thoughts to those deeper meanings of the church to which we wish to draw their attention; that this is a spiritual brotherhood; that the pastor and his associates are interested in them, because they are interested in the souls of men and the prosperity of men as it lies deep in their hearts. There are a great many ways by which leadership can be exercised.

The church has too much depended upon individual example. "So let your light shine before men" has been taken to be "put your individual self on a candlestick and shine." Now the trouble is that some people cannot find the candlestick, but the greater trouble is that they are a very poor candle and the light is very dim. It does not dispel much of the darkness for me individually to sit on the top of a candlestick. But if I lend such little contribution of spiritual forces as I have to my neighbor and to my comrade and to my friend, and we can draw a circle of friends together and unite our spiritual forces, then we have something more than example. We have cooperation, and cooperation, ladies and gentlemen, is the vital principle of social life.

I think I know something about organization. I

can make an organization, but it is one thing to have an organization and another thing to fill it with life. And then it is a very important matter what sort of life to fill it with. If the object of the organization is what the object of some business organizations is, and the object of many political organizations is, to absorb the life of the community and run the community for its own benefit, then there is nothing profitable in it. But if the object of the organization is to afford a mechanism by which the whole community can co-operatively use its life, then there is a great deal in it; and organization without the spirit of cooperation is dead and may be dangerous. So the vital principle is cooperation, and organization is secondary.

I have been a member of one or two churches that were admirably organized and were accomplishing nothing. You know some people dearly love organization. They dearly love to sit in a church and preside. They pride themselves upon their knowledge of parliamentary practice. They love to congregate and write minutes. They love to appoint committees. They boast of the number of committees that their organization has, and they like the power and the social influence of distributing their friends among the committees. And then, when the committees are formed, there is nothing to commit to them.

This is a nation which loves to go through the motion of public meetings whether there is anything particularly important to consider or not. It is an interesting thing to me that the American is actually born knowing how to conduct a public meeting. I remember

that when I was a lad I belonged to an organization which seemed to be very important, "The Lightfoot Baseball Club." Our club-room was an unoccupied corner of the loft of my father's barn, the part that the hay did not encroach upon. And I distinctly remember how we used to conduct orderly meetings of the club in that corner of the loft. I had never seen a public meeting, and I do not believe any of the other lads with whom I was associated had ever seen a public meeting. But we somehow knew how to conduct one. We knew how to make motions and second them. We knew that a motion could not have more than two amendments offered at the same time, and we knew the order in which the amendments had to be put, the second amendment before the first. How we knew it I do not know. We were born that way, I suppose.

But nothing more important happened with the Lightfoot Baseball Club than with some church organization meetings, and I remember distinctly that my delight and interest was in the meetings, not in what they were for. I delighted merely in the sense of belonging to an organization and in doing something with the organization, it did not very much matter what. Some churches are organized in that way. They are exceedingly active about nothing.

Now why not lend that organization instinct, that acting instinct, to the real things that are happening in the community, whether they have anything to do with the church or not?

We look back to the time of the early settlement of

this country and remember that in New England the church and the school were the two sources of life of the community. Everything centered in them; everything emanated from them. The school fed the church, and the church ran the community. It sometimes did not run it very liberally, and I, for my part, would not wish to see any church run any community; but I do wish to see every church assist the community in which it is established to run itself in such a way as will show that the spirit of Christianity is the spirit of assistance, of counsel, of vitalization, of intensive effort in everything that affects the lives of men, women, and children.

So I am hoping that the outcome of this conference and all that we say and do about this important matter may be to remind the church that it is put into this world not only to save the individual soul but to save society also. The church must go to work in society with a realization of the greater exigency of society than that of the individual, because if society is to be saved it must be saved in this world, not in the next. I hope that our society is not going to exist in the next. It needs amendment in several particulars, I venture to say, and I hope that the society in the next world will be amended in those particulars which I will not mention. But we have nothing to do with society in the next world. We may have something to do with the individual soul in the next world by getting it started for the next world, but we have nothing to do with the organization of society in the next world.

We have got to save society, so far as it is saved,

by the instrumentality of Christianity in this world. It is a job, therefore, we have got to undertake immediately and work at all the time. This is the business of the church.

Legislation cannot save society. Legislation cannot even rectify society. A law that will work is merely the summing up in legislative form of the moral judgment that the community has already reached.

Law records show how far society has advanced, and there have to be preceding a law instrumentalities which advance society up to that point where it is ready for record. Try the experiment of enacting a law that is the moral judgment of a very small minority of the community, and it will not work. Most people will not understand it, and if they do understand it, they will resent it. But whether they understand it and resent it or not, they will not obey it.

Law is a record of achievement; it is not a process of regeneration. Our wills have to be regenerated and our purposes rectified before we are in a position to enact laws that record those moral achievements; and that is the business primarily, it seems to me, of the Christian.

There are a great many arguments about Christianity. There are a great many things which we freely assert which we can't, in the ordinary scientific sense of the word, prove; but there are some things which we can show. The proof of Christianity is written in the biography of the saints; and by the saints I do not mean the technical saints—those whom the church or the world have picked out and labeled

saints, for they are not very numerous. I do mean by the term the people whose lives—whose individual lives—have been transformed by Christianity.

Christianity is the only force in the world that I have ever heard of which does actually transform life. And the proof of that transformation is to be found all over the Christian world, and is multiplied and repeated as Christianity gains fresh territory in the heathen world. Men begin suddenly to erect great spiritual standards over the little personal standards which they heretofore professed and will walk smiling to the stake in order that their souls may be true to themselves. There really isn't anything else that does that.

There is something that is analogous to it, and that is patriotism. Men will go into the fire of battle and freely give their lives for something greater than themselves—their duty to their country. This analogy between patriotism and Christianity is a fine one indeed. The vitalizing principle of each is the devotion of the spirit to something greater and nobler than itself.

These are transforming influences. All the transforming influences of the world are unselfish. There is not a single selfish force in the world that is not touched with sinister power, and the church is the only embodiment of the things that are entirely unselfish, the principles of self-sacrifice and devotion. Surely this is the instrumentality by which rural communities may be transformed and led to the things that are great; and surely, there is nothing in the rural community in which the rural church ought not to be the

leader and in which it ought not to be the vital actual center.

That is the simple message which I came to utter to-night, and as I began by saying that it would probably be no message, I repeat that it is no new message; I dare say it has been repeatedly said in this conference. I merely wanted to add my testimony to the validity and fire of that conception, because we are in the world to do something more than look out for ourselves.

The reason that I am proud to be an American is that America was given birth to by such conceptions as these; that its object in the world, its only reason for existence as a government, was to show men the paths of liberty and of mutual serviceability; to lift the common man out of the paths, out of the slough of discouragement, even despair, and set his feet upon firm ground; to tell him here is the high road upon which he is as much entitled to walk as any that walks; to make him realize that here is a free field and no favor, and that as his moral qualities and his physical powers are, so will his success be. No man shall make him afraid, and none shall do him an injustice.

These are the ideals of America. We have not always lived up to them; no community has always lived up to them, but we are dignified by the fact that these are the things that we live by and swear by. And America is great in the world, not as she is a successful government merely, but as she is a successful embodiment of a great ideal of unselfish citizenship. That is what makes the world feel America draws it

like a lodestone; that is the reason that the ships which cross the sea have so many hopeful eyes lifted from their humbler quarters toward the shores of the new world; that is the reason why men, after they have been for a little while in America and go back for a visit to the old country, have a new light in their faces, the light that is kindled here in the country where they have seen some of their hopes fulfilled—the light that shines from America.

God grant that it may always shine, and that in many a humble heart in quiet country churches the flames may be lighted by which this great light is kept alive.

A LAST WORD

The statement of Gifford Pinchot, chairman of the Commission on the Church and Country Life, concluding the conference, was as follows:

This conference has set the country church problem in a new position and has shown that the time is ripe for a united, vigorous, and promising effort to give the country church the power and influence which rightfully belong to it.

It has proved that the denominations represented in the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America are ready and eager to work together to give new strength to the country church. It has shown the value of the Federal Council at a new angle, and it has procured for the country church problem a hearing and a place that is national in every sense.

PUBLICATIONS
OF THE
Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

Books

Christian Unity at Work (4th Edition). The Second Council, of 1912. A Record of the Federative Movement for four years. Edited by Charles S. Macfarland, General Secretary of the Federal Council. Price, $1.00; postpaid, $1.20.

The Federal Council. The Record of the First Council at Philadelphia, 1908. Edited by Elias B. Sanford, Honorary Secretary. Price, $1.25; postpaid, $1.50.

Church Federation. The Story of Inter-Church Federation at Carnegie Hall, New York, in 1905; an Initial and Preparatory Session of the Federal Council. Edited by Elias B. Sanford. Price, $1.50; postpaid, $1.75.

Federal Council Yearbook, a Directory of the Federal Council, its constituent bodies, and other denominations, interdenominational societies, etc., with statistics. Compiled by Henry K. Carroll, Associate Secretary. Paper, 50 cents, postpaid.

The Churches of the Federal Council: Their History, Organization and Distinctive Characteristics. Ed. by Charles S. Macfarland. $1.00; postpaid, $1.10.

The Country Church—The Decline of its Influence and the Remedy; the result of an investigation, by Charles O. Gill and Gifford Pinchot, of the Commission on the Church and Country Life. Price, $1.25; postpaid, $1.36.

The Church and Country Life. Edited by Paul L. Vogt. $1.00.

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